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### JS Bach

'Escape'

Six Solo Cello Suites, BWV1007-1012

Sophie Webber VC

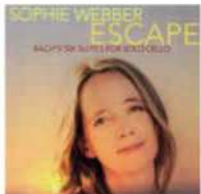
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### JS Bach

Six Solo Cello Suites, BWV1007-1012

Dariusz Skoraczewski VC

Analog Arts (F) (C) 888295 628693 (135' • DDD)



All cellists, whether on modern or period instruments, operate at the same disadvantage when playing Bach's six Solo Cello Suites. The manuscript was lost long ago and with it his thinking about the most important component beyond just the notes: the bowings. In their outstanding new 'modern' recordings of the complete cycle, Dariusz Skoraczewski, principal cellist of Marin Alsop's Baltimore Symphony, and Sophie Webber, an Oxonian living in San Diego, apply bowings – and rhythm, dynamics and speeds – with such variety and imagination that they might almost be playing different works.

In Webber's case it's as if she were playing the music in an intimate setting, perhaps for someone special, in which every note has meaning rather as a look or a touch does; the resulting conversations she has with the music are endlessly absorbing as they are being seamlessly incorporated into the fabric and flow of each movement. Her subjective narrative suggests the freedom with which Pablo Casals brought the music back to life a century ago. Working from a printed edition by Paul Tortelier, another legendary cellist who approached the Suites as if they were conversations rather than spectacles like Yo-Yo Ma's recent cycle at the Hollywood Bowl before 17,000 screaming fans, Webber finds revelation in her expectations of intimacy.

She makes seemingly spontaneous, often initially risky choices of whether

### GRAMOPHONE talks to ...

#### *Jeremy David Tarrant*

The Detroit-based organist discusses his recording of Widor's Seventh Organ Symphony

**Widor is known primarily for the Toccata from the Organ Symphony No 5. How representative is this?**

The famous Toccata is popular for good reason. Yet to know Widor only through this piece is really like knowing Handel only through the 'Hallelujah' chorus. Widor was adept as a composer in all forms, and his other music remains largely neglected. Listen to the chamber music, for example ... it's fantastic.

**What made you choose the Seventh Organ Symphony for this recording?**

It happens to be my favourite of Widor's 10 symphonies for solo organ, and it has not often been recorded, and is not often performed complete. While almost all of the movements are musically satisfying in their individual components, especially the elegant Choral, I encourage the listener to hear this symphony from beginning to end to understand its cyclic nature and grasp its scope. It runs the gamut of human emotion.



**Is this music that needs a certain type of organ or size of physical space?**

An organist will ideally possess an intimate knowledge of the organs for which Widor was writing (specifically, the instruments of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll) in order to adapt his music to other instruments. The organ on which I recorded, modelled in the French Romantic tradition, is ideal for communicating Widor's music, and it is housed in a generous acoustic. I believe it was Cavaillé-Coll who said that the room is the most important stop on the organ.

**Do you plan to record any more Widor?**

Next year is the 175th anniversary of Widor's birth and I'm mulling over a few projects. Maybe these will result in more recordings.

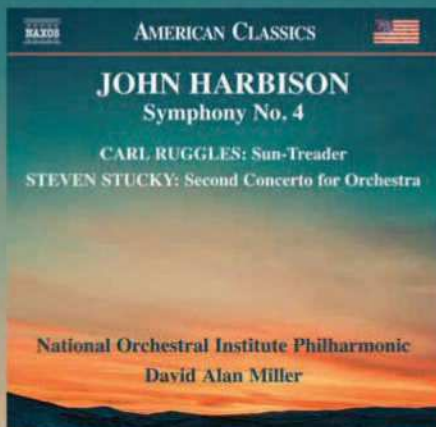
to use detached or slurred bowings to shape and enliven the music, in doing so making the music vulnerable to tone and colour and so enlarging its emotional impact. Webber's Allemandes and Courantes sound as courtly as if they were lute suites, and danceable besides; her Bourrées rollick and rock. Each suite alone is a total experience.

Working from the standard Bärenreiter Urtext, Skoraczewski and his magnificent 1702 Carlo Giuseppe Testore stride through the Suites with leonine power, splendid intonation and thrilling majesty. As befits his position, Skoraczewski is speaking to a large public audience and

clearly reaching the last seat in the house – not with sound alone but with the laser clarity of his intentions and the steady pulse of his sweep.

Overall he prefers a legato point of view, at least in the slower movements. His Courantes, however, are ferociously undanceable; his Gigue has jig-like energy and bounce; his Fifth Suite is haunted by actually spooky *scordatura* tuning; and he surges in the Sixth Suite to carry the day. The recordings, which Skoraczewski self-produced in his home studio, capture the sounds of his instrument with smooth audiophile power.

Laurence Vittes



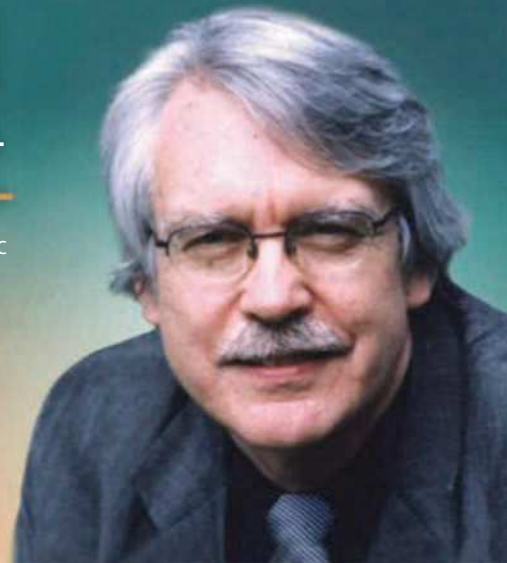
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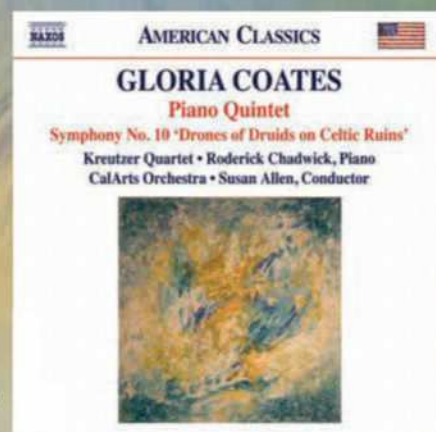
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Every note has meaning: Sophie Webber brings a conversational intimacy to Bach's Cello Suites – see review on page I

## Krash

'Past Made Present'

Young Vilna<sup>a</sup>. Sulpicia's Songs<sup>b</sup>. Turns of Phrase<sup>c</sup>. Cantigas de amigo of Martin Codax<sup>b</sup>. Delphi: What the Oracle Said<sup>d</sup>

<sup>b</sup>Emily Noël sop <sup>c</sup>Laura Kaufman fl <sup>a</sup>Robert DiLutis cl <sup>a</sup>Ian Swensen vn <sup>ad</sup>Tanya Anisimova vc <sup>bc</sup>Jessica

Krash pf <sup>a</sup>Members of the Washington Master Chorale / Thomas Colohan

Albany Ⓢ TROY1716 (74' • DDD)



The intersection of past and present – past made present, as the disc's title states – is nowhere more tellingly realised than in the second of Jessica Krash's two song-cycles on this thoroughly engaging, thought-provoking programme. The *Cantigas de amigo of Martin Codax* (2015) are seven songs by the eponymous 13th-century Spanish minstrel to which Krash composed a 'modern piano accompaniment ... faithful to the emotional and structural ideas of the original songs'. The result is a truly vibrant fusion of past and present, the piano at

times emulating medieval instruments, at others being itself. Krash also composed the vocal part for the sixth song, missing from the manuscript. It is a haunting cycle, full of youthful ardour and steely-eyed wistfulness.

*Sulpicia's Songs* (2015), setting texts from even further back in time (first-century BC Rome), sit squarely within the late-Romantic art-song tradition, less remarkable but radiantly sung here – as are the *Martin Codax Cantigas* – by Emily Noël. Ancient Greece is evoked in the compelling unaccompanied cello solo, *Delphi: What the Oracle Said* (1997, rev 2014).

Krash's musical language is euphoniously tonal, chameleon-like in style, allowing her to create convincing works as different as the two song-cycles and the Impressionistic fantasy for flute, *Turns of Phrase* (2016), inspired by the shakuhachi and delightfully played by Laura Kaufman and the composer, a sensitive accompanist here as in the songs. There are places where Krash's euphony becomes counterproductive, as in the

cantata *Young Vilna*, where the harrowing implications of the text – a series of questions concerning the Holocaust as it occurred in Lithuania (Krash is of Lithuanian Jewish descent) – are just not reflected in the musical setting. Despite disparate provenance, the recordings sound well together and make a fine case for a fascinating composer. Well worth investigating. **Guy Rickards**

## Reale

Concerto 'Dies irae'<sup>a</sup>. Piano Sonatas – No 7, 'Veni Creator Spiritus'<sup>b</sup>; No 8, 'Il trionfo della folia'<sup>c</sup>

<sup>b</sup>Paul Reale, <sup>c</sup>Walter Ponce pf <sup>a</sup>The Mirecourt Trio;

<sup>a</sup>California State University Wind Ensemble / David Whitwell

MSR Classics Ⓢ MS1693 (57' • DDD)

Recorded <sup>a</sup>1982; <sup>bc</sup>live, <sup>b</sup>March 1997, <sup>c</sup>January 2013

## Reale

'Chopin's Ghosts'

Durch die Jahreszeiten II (German Folk Songs). Cello Sonatas<sup>a</sup> – No 1; No 2, 'Chopin's Ghost'.

Séance. Wexford Carol<sup>a</sup>

Kim Cook vc <sup>a</sup>Christopher Guzman pf

Naxos American Classics Ⓢ 8 559820 (59' • DDD)

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Pictured: Cecilia Bartoli (Decca/© Uli Weber/St Petersburg 2014) who featured on the November 2014 cover of Gramophone. Full annual retail price for print only (13 issues) is \$136.50; print only annual subscription, Digital Edition and reviews Database (\$94); Digital Club (\$130); Gramophone Club (\$168). Postage and packaging is not included for overseas orders. Overseas subscription p&p: Europe \$28.99 Rest of World \$35.75. If you have a subscription enquiry then please email [subscriptions@markallengroup.com](mailto:subscriptions@markallengroup.com)





Two new recordings of music by Paul Reale (b1943) on different labels confirm that the American composer deserves more attention. The repertoire touches the tip of the Reale iceberg – among his works are 11 piano sonatas, three piano concertos and nine other concertos – but the pieces here more than demonstrate the skill and imagination he brings to his art.

Reale's studies with such eminent 20th-century figures as George Crumb, Otto Luening, Chou Wen-chung and George Rochberg might suggest that he falls into specific modernist schools of composition. On the contrary, Reale brings a wealth of stylistic knowledge to music full of references but also bursting with creative ideas and expressive generosity. Most of the activity in the works on these recordings is tonally based, yet with surprising detours that keep the ear alert to the evolution of material.

The MSR Classics disc contains two of Reale's piano sonatas and a piece of exceptional appeal and unusual scoring, the Concerto *Dies irae* for piano trio and wind ensemble. There is never a moment when the soloists and ensemble sound at odds with one another. Reale uses the wind ensemble so deftly that its palette of colours adds subtle connections as violin, cello and piano weave lines through exuberant and, when the 'Dies irae' theme exerts itself, dark terrain. The performance, from 1982, is an alluring series of conversations between violinist Kenneth Goldsmith, cellist Terry King, pianist John Jensen and the fine California State University Wind Ensemble under David Whitwell.

Reale is the first-rate soloist in his Piano Sonata No 7, subtitled *Veni Creator Spiritus* for its nuanced use of the plainchant within five movements that make inventive use of traditional forms. In the Piano Sonata No 8, *Il trionfo della folia*, Reale reflects the mad quality of the 'La folia' theme through a spectrum of virtuoso flourishes, played with purposeful brilliance by Walter Ponce.

The works for cello and piano on the Naxos release reveal more sides of Reale's sensibility. The centrepiece is the Cello Sonata No 2, subtitled *Chopin's Ghost* for its homage to the Polish composer, both in Romantic urgency and echoes of Chopin's

music. Equally captivating are the Cello Sonata No 1, *German Folk Songs*, *Wexford Carol* and, especially, *Séance*, a piece for solo cello in which contemporary premonitions rub shoulders with Baroque titbits. The performances by cellist Kim Cook and pianist Christopher Guzman are keenly alive to Reale's vivid sound world.

Donald Rosenberg

## Widor · Litaize · Vierne

**Litaize** Lied **Vierne** Clair de lune, Op 53 No 5. Impromptu, Op 54 No 2. Toccata, Op 53 No 6  
**Widor** Symphony No 7, Op 42 No 3

**Jeremy David Tarrant** org

Raven © OAR146 (68' • DDD)

Played on the Casavant organ, Op 3898, of the First Presbyterian Church, Kirkwood, MO



Organist Jeremy David Tarrant rightly claims Charles-Marie Widor's Seventh

Symphony to be 'the apex of symphonic writing for organ', a successful fusion of virtuoso ambition and thematic unity. One needs a combination of fingers, musicality and brains to show how the six movements coalesce insofar as tempo relationships, registrations and emotional contrast are concerned. The choice of instrument also helps. For example, the Casavant Organ at the First Presbyterian Church in Kirkwood, Missouri, featured in Tarrant's recording boasts plenty of sonorous heft and dynamic contrast, while the colourfully diverse stops blend without seeming overly diffuse, in contrast to the shattering brightness in loud *tuttis* that one hears in certain Cavaillé-Coll instruments associated with this repertoire.

However, it's ultimately Tarrant's show. He minimises the first movement's episodic tendencies by treating the big chordal passages as signposts, while sculpting contrapuntal sequences in forward-moving arcs. He also brings more pliability to the second-movement *Andantino agitato*'s counterpoint, although you strain to hear the *pianissimos* without turning up the volume beforehand. The *Allegretto* has a fetching lilt and attractive linear independence; indeed, the pedal staccatos occasionally sound as though they were plucked. Tarrant shapes the fourth movement from an eagle-eyed, big-picture perspective, with the long melodies in the foreground and the undulating accompaniment unfolding in fluid paragraphs.

Despite similar timings for the fifth movement, Tarrant's more liberal tempo modifications and aching delicacy in quiet passages differ from Joseph Nolan's relatively generalised and less characterfully contrasted performance. Granted, Nolan's broad, monumental way with the finale drives the descending chromatic lines' point home, yet I lean towards Tarrant's faster reading for its cumulative energy and feeling of inevitability, while retaining affection for the diffusive wildness and dexterous élan of Daniel Roth's classic recording (Mottete, 10/90 – nla).

The remaining works are more than mere fillers. Some listeners may find Gaston Litaize's *Lied* less rambling and static than I do but two of the three Vierne pieces (the Impromptu and the Toccata) allow Tarrant to let loose and show off – tastefully, of course! **Jed Distler**

*Symphony No 7 – selected comparison:*

Nolan (SIGN) SIGCD337

## '20th Century Masterpieces'

**NT Berezovsky** Fantasie, Op 9<sup>a</sup> **Creston** Concerto, Op 50<sup>a</sup> **Lopatnikoff** Concerto, Op 33<sup>b</sup> **Malipiero** Dialoghi VII<sup>b</sup> **Poulenc** Concerto<sup>a</sup> **Starer** Concerto<sup>c</sup> **Tansman** Suite<sup>b</sup>

**Pierce & Jonas** Piano Duo; <sup>c</sup>**Czech Radio** Symphony Orchestra / **Carlos Piantini**;

<sup>a</sup>**National Symphony Orchestra of Polish** Radio & Television; <sup>b</sup>**Slovak State**

**Philharmonic Orchestra** / <sup>ab</sup>**David Amos**

MSR Classics © ② MS1651 (127' • DDD)

Recorded 1992-97



The vogue for piano duos that peaked in the mid-20th century resulted

in a proliferation of concertos written for two pianos and orchestra, many of which have long fallen off the radar. Indeed, out of the seven compositions offered in this first of two volumes surveying 20th-century two-piano concertos, six appear to be first recordings.

Nikolai Lopatnikoff's Concerto dates from 1949-50 and its sinewy concertante style suggests a more glittery manifestation of Hindemith. Tansman's exuberant neoclassical style reaches inventive heights in a four-movement suite from 1928. The first movement's combination of thick bitonal textures and chugging lopsided rhythms might be described as the lovechild of Stravinsky and Milhaud, although Tansman's voice gorgeously steps up to the plate, so to speak, in the *Lento*'s intriguing

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interaction between the pianos and a solo clarinet. The third-movement *Presto possibile* is a perpetual-motion study that begins with a murmur and ends in a whirlwind. Yet the inventively varied fourth-movement 'Variations, Double Fugue and Finale' proves anything but anticlimactic (I especially love the Sarabande variation's sweeping expressive arcs and concentrated gravitas). Of the three short movements comprising Malipiero's 1956 *Dialoghi VII*, I prefer the central *Lento*'s unpredictable plot line and harmonic originality to the outer movements' Bartókian derivations, however exciting they may be on the surface. However, Nicolai Berezovsky's two-movement *Fantasia* from 1931 abounds with personality, from the audacious glissandos and pounding pedal points at the outset to the *Allegro vivo*'s boundless brio and wit.

If Robert Starer makes his contrapuntal acumen a tad too obvious throughout his 1993 Concerto, his gift for deploying instruments, caustic first-desk soloist melodic rejoinders, non-generic percussion colorations and quirky hints of jazz constantly hold attention. However, Paul Creston's 1951 Concerto seems more substantial in regard to its symphonic breadth, understated rhythmic variety and taut workmanship. The first movement features a good deal of demanding chordal interplay between pianists and orchestra, while tight motivic integration unifies the long *Andante pastorale*'s apparent rhapsodic trajectory. The vivid finale purports to be a tarantella, yet it is easier to grab an eel than to tap your foot alongside Creston's cross-rhythmic phrase groupings.

Poulenc's Two-Piano Concerto needs no introduction, except to say that the expertly dovetailed ensemble and pointedly precise fingerwork of Joshua Pierce and Dorothy Jonas (the finale's rapid-fire repeated notes, for example) yield nothing to the catalogue competition. While loud passages reveal a monochrome patina to the pianos that may or may not be due to the otherwise clear and vivid engineering, there's no doubt that the performances and interpretations were prepared with great care and expertise. Ditto the unusually informative and musically perceptive booklet notes by my late composer/writer colleague and friend Eric Salzman. Needless to say, I look forward to Vol 2. **Jed Distler**

## 'Feico Solo'

**Adams China Gates Eisenga For Mattia Frahm Hammers. Went Missing Glass Étude 12. Mishima**

**Sonata. Opening. Theme from 'Candyman' D Lang Wed Mansell Together We Will Live Forever Pärt Für Alina M Richter The Blue Notebooks. Written on the Sky Sakamoto Energy Flow. Opus**

**Feico Deutekom pf**

Zefir © ZEF9654 (75' • DDD)



The 17 short pieces on pianist Feico Deutekom's new disc are made

of tiny cells that evolve through subtle repetition and development. In days not too far gone by the style would have been termed 'minimalism' but the composers Deutekom celebrates reflect the moniker to varied, and often eloquent, degrees. The usual suspects – Philip Glass and John Adams – are here, as well as others who use simple musical means to sometimes intricate artistic ends.

What ultimately makes 'Feico Solo' so alluring is the pianist's total commitment to the nuanced writing in each work. The music at times is relentless and dreamily reflective, and Deutekom imbues the slowly shifting harmonies and tender melodic lines with organic fluency. In other hands, these pieces occasionally might come across as inspired doodling; as Deutekom plays them, they are seamless arcs.

Singling out specific composers would appear to be an exercise in futility, since all of them expertly build structures that have a beating heart. Glass's swirling style is familiar – notably in Deutekom's transformation of string music into the *Mishima Sonata* – as is the glistening aura of an early Adams opus, *China Gates*.

The repertoire includes two captivating works by Ryuichi Sakamoto with nods to Chopin and Debussy, a brief, tender David Lang score (*Wed*) and pieces by Douwe Eisenga, Max Richter, Arvo Pärt, Nils Frahm and Clint Mansell that make themselves felt through affecting and invigorating concision. Deutekom honours them all. **Donald Rosenberg**

## 'For Glenn Gould'

**JS Bach Partita No 5, BWV829. Goldberg Variations, BWV988 – Aria. Sinfonias – No 4, BWV790; No 7, BWV793; No 8, BWV794; No 11, BWV797; No 14, BWV800 Berg Piano Sonata, Op 1 Brahms Intermezzos – Op 117 No 3; Op 118 No 2 Gibbons Lord Salisbury's Pavan and Galliard Sweelinck Fantasia in D**

**Stewart Goodyear pf**

Sono Luminus © DSL92220 (66' • DDD)



Many years ago I was hired to perform Beethoven's C minor Variations with the

Bill T Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. Jones had based his choreography on Glenn Gould's recording, and it was up to me to replicate Gould's idiosyncratically slow conception. Although I could match Gould's tempos, I couldn't begin to imitate his sonority, his articulation, his voicing, his phrasing. No one can; nor should one try.

Similarly, in this excellently engineered release, Stewart Goodyear more or less replicates the programme that Gould played for his 1955 American debut recitals, yet his interpretations owe little to Gould and nearly everything to his own strong personality and intelligent musicianship. In contrast to Gould's signature hair-trigger staccato articulation, Goodyear's rapid runs in the Gibbons Galliard and Sweelinck Fantasia connect in long lines, yet with a palpable sense of air between the notes. He contours the three-part interplay of Bach's Sinfonias in singing arcs where the legato is produced through finger power and hand balance, with little help from the sustain pedal. If an air of caution hovers over the G major Partita's Praeambulum, Goodyear's firm and extrovert Allemande contrasts to Gould's scaled-down intimacy. While the Courante and Gigue evoke Gould's famous *détaché* approach, Goodyear goes his own way regarding emphasis and accent.

I suspect that the unusually pliant bass lines on which Goodyear's interpretations of the Brahms A major and C sharp minor Intermezzos pivot have more than a little to do with his own compositional proclivities (Goodyear's own piano music is highly contrapuntal). Also note the variations in voicing during the Berg Sonata's exposition repeat, and the way Goodyear resists the usual temptation to plough through the overlapping entrances to register clearly and logically. By contrast, the final climax might have benefited from more breathing room, yet the pianist gauges the desolate concluding measures to perfection.

Naturally all good Gould tributes include the Aria from Bach's *Goldberg Variations* as an encore. Despite Goodyear's relaxed walking tempo and straightforward simplicity, he would have made the point more succinctly without observing both A- and B-section repeats. As did Gould ... **Jed Distler**



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## Salonen and classical music in the digital age

Four years ago I met Esa-Pekka Salonen, this month's cover artist, in Berlin's Apple Store. The conductor/composer and I didn't just happen to bump into each other while simultaneously browsing for new iPads, I hasten to add. I was there because he was fronting Apple's new advertising campaign; and that this uncompromising contemporary classical musician was deemed to be representative of the cool creativity Apple wanted to convey remains, for me at least, a high-point in recent merchandise marketing history. But while a four-year-old iPad will already have been superseded several times by newer models, Salonen – about to celebrate his 60th birthday – only grows in wisdom and reflectiveness, as our interview reveals. He emerges as a man immersed in music, but immersed in the wider world too, his hinterland and creative vision embracing both remote landscape and the latest technology, just as his music-making embodies creation and re-creation within the same questing outlook. A perfect model, perhaps, of an artist for our era.

An artist's growth may be gradual; technology's, however, is vertiginous. Last week, the international record industry body the IFPI revealed that digital revenue (ie downloads and streaming) now makes up more than half of the global music market – that's a figure that now holds true for 32 countries, six of which crossed that threshold this year. The figure was boosted by a staggering 41 per cent increase in income from streaming last year. Physical revenue declined by 5 per cent – though vinyl continued to grow, and now makes up 3.7 per cent of total income.



Martin Cullingford

These trends are important for a number of reasons. To start with, lurking in here is some good news. For many years now we've heard of the decline of the record industry, but at least now it's beginning to see some growth again. Closer to *Gramophone's* home, the UK record industry body the BPI reported that similar growth in streaming led to an overall increase of 10.7 per cent in revenue last year – the biggest increase for two decades. As this is for all genres of course, I took some classical-specific soundings, and some labels I talked to revealed that digital revenue is now a very meaningful part of their business. The challenges, however, remain very real, and these overall figures hide a great disparity in terms of what individual recordings might achieve in terms of sales. And it's some relief to hear that classical CD sales remain, for now, more resilient than in some other genres.

Income is one thing; but if the aim of those of us who love classical music is for it to be heard by, and to enrich the lives of, as many people as possible, then there's something else worth noting. Labels report that their music is being streamed – in significant numbers – in countries to which their CDs were simply never shipped. The web breaks down barriers. Music breaks down barriers. We initially talked of streaming's advantage as being convenience, then about bridging borders between genres, but perhaps the true power of the streaming revolution to transform classical music is only now beginning to reveal itself – in a world in which remote landscape and modern technology meet in more minds than just Esa-Pekka Salonen's.

[martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com](mailto:martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com)

## THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



'Sitting down with Esa-Pekka Salonen was an inspiration,' says **ANDREW FARACH-COLTON**, author

of our cover story. 'I've always been wowed by the boyish exuberance and intellectual perspicacity of his music-making, but in conversation, it was his dry wit and generosity that left me in awe.'



'It has been hugely exciting to witness the rehabilitation of Parry's music over the last 40 years,' says **JEREMY DIBBLE**. 'Much of that has

been due to the attention he has received from the recording industry and from so many great performing artists who have brought his work so vibrantly to life.'



'Having first heard *Asrael* when Talich's was the only version commercially available,' says **RICHARD WHITEHOUSE**, author of our

Collection. 'It was gratifying to listen to 19 recordings and find a range of interpretative approaches being brought to this early-20th-century masterpiece.'

*Gramophone*, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts, which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is *the* magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.

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FRANZ  
SCHUBERT

# oktett

ISABELLE FAUST

ANNE KATHARINA SCHREIBER | DANUSHA WASKIEWICZ | KRISTIN VON DER GOLTZ  
JAMES MUNRO | LORENZO COPPOLA | JAVIER ZAFRA | TEUNIS VAN DER ZWART

In response to a commission from Count Troyer, who wanted a work closely modelled on Beethoven's famous Septet op. 20, Schubert – despite his fervent admiration for the older composer – resolutely struck out on his own by delivering an . . . Octet. While the enlarged forces opened his path towards symphonic writing, examination of the form and expression reveals a much more accomplished and personal composition than has generally been recognised by commentators.

Isabelle Faust and her partners, enthralled by what is an exceptional work in every respect, offer us a new interpretation of it on period instruments. contrast, interpreted with unique grace by Paul Lewis!



OPERA

## I PURITANI

V. BELLINI - OCTOBER 2018

Franklin · Miskimmon / Camarena, Kwiecień, Yende

## KÁTYA KABANOVÁ

L. JANÁČEK - NOVEMBER 2018

Pons · Alden / Racette, Schukoff, Ognovenko

## L'ITALIANA IN ALGERI

G. ROSSINI - DECEMBER 2018

Frizza · Borrelli / Pisoni, Abrahamyan, Mironov

## MADAMA BUTTERFLY

G. PUCCINI - JANUARY 2019

Bisanti · Leiser & Caurier / Haroutonian, Jorge de León

## L'ENIGMA DI LEA

WORLDWIDE PREMIERE

B. CASABLANCAS - FEBRUARY 2019

Pons · Portacelli / Cook, Sabata

## RODELINDA

BARCELONA OBERTURA SPRING FESTIVAL

G.F. HÄNDEL - MARCH 2019

Pons · Guth / Oropoesa, Mehta, Cooke

## LA GIOCONDA

A. PONCHIELLI - APRIL 2019

Calvo · Pizzi / Theorin, D'Arcangelo, Jagde

## LES PÊCHEURS DE PERLES

G. BIZET - MAY 2019

Abel · de Beer / Bakanova, Osborn

## TOSCA

G. PUCCINI - JUNE 2019

Fiore · Azorín / Monastyrsky, Sartori, Schrott

## LUISA MILLER

G. VERDI - JULY 2019

Hindoyan · Michieletto / Beczala, Salsi, Radvanovsky

OPERA CONCERT VERSION

## CANDIDE

L. BERNSTEIN

OCTOBER 2018

DeMain / Appleby, Lewek, Soffel

## HAMLET

A. THOMAS

MARCH 2019

BARCELONA OBERTURA SPRING FESTIVAL

Oren / Álvarez, Testé, Damrau

## AGRIPPINA

G.F. HÄNDEL

MAY 2019

Emelyanychev / DiDonato, Fagioli

CONCERTS AND RECITALS

## FROM ASHUR TO SEVILLE

NOVEMBER 2018

ABU DHABI FESTIVAL

## PIOTR BECZALA

NOVEMBER 2018

## IRÈNE THEORIN

MARCH 2019

## LE CONCERT D'ASTRÉE

APRIL 2019

## THE "RING" WITHOUT WORDS

JULY 2019

BALLET

## DON QUIJOTE

COMPAÑÍA NACIONAL  
DE DANZA

SEPTEMBER 2019

## BALLET DE L'OPÉRA DE LYON

BELLA FIGURA, PETITE MORT,  
WINGS OF WAX

APRIL 2019

## ZAGUÁN & ALENTÓ

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## LICEU OPERA BREAKS 2018-2019

October 18th - 21st **CANDIDE** (c.v.) + **I PURITANI**

November 17th & 18th **SCHUBERT / MAHLER** +  
**KÁTYA KABANOVÁ**

March 7th - 11th **HAMLET** (c.v.) + **RODELINDA**

March 13th - 15th **RODELINDA** + **IRÈNE THEORIN**

April 5th - 7th **LA GIOCONDA** + **LE CONCERT D'ASTRÉE**

May 17th - 19th **LES PÊCHEURS DE PERLES** +  
**AGRIPPINA**

July 24th - 26th **LUISA MILLER** +  
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# GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

**Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews**



RECORDING OF THE MONTH



**CRUSELL**  
Clarinet Concertos  
Swedish Chamber Orchestra /  
Michael Collins *cl*  
Chandos  
► **JEREMY NICHOLAS'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 30**

These three early-19th-century concerto showpieces delightfully bring out the best of the clarinet as an instrument, and Michael Collins as a player of real virtuosity and character. Enjoy!



**ADAMS** Violin Concerto  
Leila Josefowicz *vn*  
St Louis Symphony Orchestra /  
David Robertson  
Nonesuch

Leila Josefowicz returns to the Adams concerto on record 16 years since her last version, and triumphs, bringing to it thrilling drama, individuality and insight.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 32**



**BEETHOVEN**  
Symphonies Nos 4 & 5  
Vienna Symphony Orchestra /  
Philippe Jordan  
Wiener Symphoniker

This is turning out to be a cycle well worth following; as with January's Nos 1 and 3, this pairing reveals maestro and musicians in a perfectly shared vision.

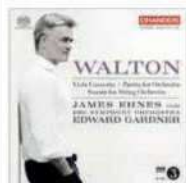
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 33**



**BERNSTEIN**  
Orchestral Works  
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra /  
Christian Lindberg  
BIS

Anyone looking to discover Leonard Bernstein's own music in his anniversary year would do very well to start here: an album full of rhythm and life.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 35**



**WALTON** Viola Concerto.  
Orchestral Works  
James Ehnes *va*  
BBC Symphony Orchestra /  
Edward Gardner  
Chandos

Edward Gardner's Walton journey continues with another superb release, and another superb soloist – this time James Ehnes in the Viola Concerto.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 44**



**HAYDN** Piano Trios  
Trio Wanderer  
Harmonia Mundi  
When our resident Haydn advocate – David Threasher –

suggests I listen to a new recording of the composer's piano trios, it would be remiss not to! Played and recorded with great clarity throughout; a wonderful release.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 54**



**'1700'**  
Concerto Italiano /  
Rinaldo Alessandrini  
Naïve  
The strong sense of ensemble generated by

Rinaldo Alessandrini and his impeccable colleagues makes for a delightful, elegant and thrilling visit to the musical world of 18th-century Italy.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 59**



**SCHUBERT** Piano Sonata  
No 21. Four Impromptus  
Marc-André Hamelin *pf*  
Hyperion  
All new recordings by

Marc-André Hamelin, one of our most inquisitive and virtuosic pianists, are eagerly anticipated; that this Schubert set should earn our critic's high recommendation demonstrates why.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 68**



**JS BACH** Cantatas  
Sols; Ricercar Consort /  
Philippe Pierlot  
Mirare  
Three Bach cantatas

united by the theme of consolation. All are beautifully, eloquently and movingly sung, matched throughout by excellent playing from the Ricercar Consort led superbly by Philippe Pierlot.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 72**



**M LAMBERT**  
Leçons de Ténèbres  
Marc Mauillon *bass* et al  
Harmonia Mundi  
Marc Mauillon's interpretation lends

a strongly personal and communicative power and intimacy to a recording of these contemplative works written for the darkening days of Holy Week.

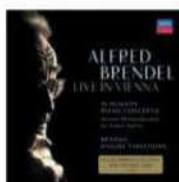
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 75**



**DVD/BLU-RAY**  
**MAHLER** Symphony No 1  
Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra / Riccardo Chailly  
Accentus

An opportunity to hear Riccardo Chailly's insight into Mahler's First Symphony, both from the perspective of the podium through this filmed performance of 2015, and in interview.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 38**



**REISSUE/ARCHIVE**  
**SCHUMANN** Piano  
Concerto  
Alfred Brendel *pf* Vienna  
Philharmonic Orchestra /  
Sir Simon Rattle Decca

'An essential addition to the Brendel discography' writes critic Harriet Smith.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 43**



Listen to many of the Editor's Choice recordings online at **qobuz.com**

# FOR THE RECORD

## Sheku Kanneh-Mason gets Royal wedding invitation



Cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason was last month announced as one of the musicians at the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, while Decca revealed it was to make the service available for streaming within hours of the event, followed by a CD release the following week. (Depending on how swiftly you read your *Gramophone*, that CD may already be available: the ceremony is at St George's, Windsor on May 19).

19-year-old Kanneh-Mason has already proved himself a compelling ambassador for classical music,

and one able to reach wide audiences, since he was first propelled to fame by his success at the 2016 BBC Young Musician Competition. His debut album, entitled 'Inspiration' and built around Shostakovich's First Cello Concerto, entered the album charts – for all genres – at number 18, helped by the popularity on streaming services of his arrangement of Bob Marley's 'No Woman, No Cry'. His association with such a high-profile event as the royal wedding can therefore only be a highly positive thing both for him, and for the art form itself.

His fellow performers at the service were set to include gospel group The Kingdom Choir, conducted by Karen Gibson, an orchestra comprising musicians from the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, the English Chamber Orchestra and the Philharmonia conducted by Christopher Warren-Green, soprano Elin Manahan Thomas, and of course the Choir of St George's Chapel under its music director James Vivian.

## Anniversaries explored at BBC Proms



Proms-bound: Teodor Currentzis

Leonard Bernstein, the First World War, and the centenary of women getting the vote are just some of the key themes to feature in this year's BBC Proms, which begin on July 13.

Perhaps the highest-profile of international music festivals, the BBC Proms draws artists and ensembles from around the world to London's Royal Albert Hall over the summer months. All performances are broadcast on BBC Radio 3, and many on BBC television too.

Ninety debuts by artists include the first visit to the Proms by Teodor Currentzis and MusicAeterna (recipients of Recording of the Month in our January issue for their Sony release of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony). Other anniversaries being marked include those of

Debussy, Lili Boulanger and Hubert Parry, while Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos* will be heard alongside new responses commissioned from contemporary composers including Uri Caine, Brett Dean and Anders Hillborg. For details of the full season, visit [bbc.co.uk/proms](http://bbc.co.uk/proms).

## Mahler on Medici

Our composer focus on this month's *Gramophone* Medici video playlist is Mahler, one of the most performed symphonists in concert halls today. Our playlist brings you: Alan Gilbert performing No 2 (at an emotionally charged 9/11 concert in New York), Riccardo Chailly taking charge of No 4 in Leipzig (you can also watch him give a magnificent account of No 1 on a new Accentus DVD – see page 38), Klaus Tennstedt, a great Mahlerian whose career blossomed quite late in his life, conducting the Fifth, and Claudio Abbado giving us Nos 6 and 9, two of Mahler's most personal utterances.

Thomas Hampson, no stranger to Mahler's music, steers our Masterclass, while this month's cover artist, Esa-Pekka Salonen, rehearses Debussy's *La mer* – looking very youthful! It's also almost exactly 60 years since Van Cliburn's historic victory at the first Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow; Peter Rosen's fascinating documentary looks at the pianist's remarkable story. And, side by side, two performances of Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto: from Daniel Barenboim and Alfred Brendel. Simply visit [medici.tv](http://medici.tv) and search for 'Gramophone selects'.

## Celebrate with Sony: Living Stereo explored

Exactly 60 years ago, RCA Victor released its first titles under the Living Stereo imprint, and throughout May and June Sony Classical, the current custodian of the label, is celebrating the catalogue through anniversary playlists on all major streaming sites, specially made videos providing background to the label, and on social media.

It's all aimed at drawing listeners towards some of the catalogue gems which are now available to stream and download in hi-res sound. Living Stereo played host to many of the greatest artists of the post-war generation including conductors such as Fritz Reiner, Charles Munch, Pierre Monteux and Leopold Stokowski, pianists including Van Cliburn, Arthur Rubinstein, Byron Janis and Emil Gilels, guitarist Julian Bream, cellist Gregor Piatigorsky, sopranos Leontyne Price and Birgit Nilsson, and contralto Marian Anderson. RCA started recording in stereo in 1954 and employed a three-channel process that produced sound that, all these years later, still feels focused and amazingly fresh.



## 28-year-old American wins Malko

The Malko Competition for Young Conductors has this year been won by Ryan Bancroft, a 28-year-old American.

Along with €20,000, he will now be mentored by conductor Fabio Luisi – head of the competition's jury – and artist manager Jennifer Spencer, who will offer career guidance; he will also receive invitations to conduct 24 symphony orchestras in Canada, Europe and the Far East.

Bancroft made his presence felt at the Copenhagen competition – which was live streamed on [gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk) complete with commentary by *Gramophone* writer Andrew Mellor – from the first round, putting his mark on repertoire from Beethoven to Schumann, and indeed gave the world premiere of Poul Ruders' *Sarabande Blues* by default, as the first contestant to play the prescribed work



Triumph for Ryan Bancroft

through in front of the audience without stopping the Danish National Symphony Orchestra to make adjustments.

A native of Los Angeles, Bancroft studied at the Californian Institute of the Arts and at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, during which time he appeared frequently as a trumpeter with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra.

Second place – and also the prize awarded by the

competition's Children's Jury – went to 28-year-old Russian Anna Rakitina, and third place to 23-year-old Italian Alessandro Bonato.

More than 566 conductors from around the world applied to participate in the week long, triennial Malko Competition for Young Conductors, with 24 being chosen to conduct at the competition itself.

## ONE TO WATCH

### Aimi Kobayashi Piano

Now 22 years old, the Japanese pianist Aimi Kobayashi (pronounced 'Eye-mee' rather than 'Ay-mee') was a child prodigy – videos of her playing in concert at pre-school age can be seen on YouTube – and she has developed into an artist of real lyrical sensibility. She won gold medals at the Asia-Pacific and ASIA International Chopin Competitions in 2009 and 2010 respectively, and went on to be a finalist at the 2015 International Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw. She is now at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where she studies with Meng-Chieh Liu. Kobayashi has already performed at Carnegie Hall four times, as well as extensively in Poland and her native Japan, including at Suntory Hall in Tokyo.

After making a CD for EMI Classics Japan when in her mid-teens, Aimi Kobayashi has now been signed by Warner Classics. Her first full international release, of Chopin



(Second Piano Sonata) and Liszt (*Petrarch Sonnets*, *Dante Sonata* and *Liebestraum No 3*), came out in April, and is reviewed next issue. It will be exciting to see how her recording career develops, given Warner Classics's proven track record of nurturing young talent.

## GRAMOPHONE Online

The magazine is just the beginning. Visit [gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk) for ...

### Podcast archive

The *Gramophone* Podcast archive on iTunes is a treasure trove of fascinating interviews with leading artists and composers, including Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, Murray Perahia, Riccardo Chailly and Dame Janet Baker. There are now more than 140 podcasts to enjoy and you can explore them all for free in iTunes, simply search for 'Gramophone Podcast'.



### Hi-Res Audio digital magazine

The world of high-resolution audio can be a confusing one, with rival file formats, hi-fi equipment and recordings competing for your attention. That's why we've produced *High-Resolution Audio: A Gramophone Guide*, a free digital magazine which includes a beginner's guide that tells you everything you need to know in order to make the most of high-resolution recordings without breaking the bank. Also included are full reviews of many recent outstanding hi-res recordings so that you can truly enjoy the substantial listening benefits that hi-res audio equipment can bring.

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# IN THE STUDIO

● Last month, the conductor **Sakari Oramo** returned to the studio with the Vienna Philharmonic (with whom he won *Gramophone's* Contemporary Award in 2015 for Per Nørgård's First and Eighth Symphonies) to record Rued Langgaard's Second and Sixth Symphonies. He also picked up the violin for Jacob Gade's *Tango Jalousie*. The recording was made in the Vienna Konzerthaus for Da Capo in April, and will be released in October.

● In April, **Chineke!** finished recording Errollyn Wallen's *Concerto Grosso*, along with other works including Philip Herbert's *Elegy: In memoriam* – *Stephen Lawrence*. The sessions took place at All Saints' Church in East Finchley, London, for NMC, and the release has been set for 2019.

● It's been a busy couple of months for *Gramophone's* 2016 Young Artist, as **Benjamin Appl** has just recorded his second solo album for Sony Classical – a collection of music by Bach – for which he was joined by **Concerto Köln**. Expect an October release.

● **Tenebrae** has joined forces with the mezzo **Dame Sarah Connolly** and the actor **Simon Callow** to record the works of Ivor Gurney and

other British composers for Signum. It's a project close to Connolly's heart: she wrote her thesis on the poet-composer while she was a student at the RCM, and is now a patron of The Ivor Gurney Society. 'A Walk with Ivor Gurney', named after the piece by Judith Bingham (commissioned by the choir in 2013), is due out in October.

● More British fare from Somm: a collection – all premiere recordings – of piano music by Sir Granville Bantock (born 150 years ago this year). Recorded in November at the Turner Sims Hall of Southampton University, the pianist was **Maria Marchant**. The disc is out in June.

● Back in April, the **Marsyas Trio** concluded their sessions for NMC in the Boilerhouse at Royal Holloway, University of London. The trio have recorded Thea Musgrave's *Canta Cantata* as part of their all-female, cross-generational composers recording, which is scheduled for release in October.

● The LSO's Principal Guest Conductor, **Gianandrea Noseda**, has embarked on a complete cycle of Shostakovich symphonies for LSO Live. The Eighth was recorded at the Barbican last month and will be released in October.

## STUDIO FOCUS *Hermann Bäumer*

The conductor has just recorded *Edda II*, part two of Jón Leifs's ambitious Icelandic trilogy, in Reykjavik for BIS

**The Edda oratorio is a massive work by Leifs (1899-1968) based on Iceland's Poetic Edda, a book of Old Norse poems ...**

It's such an honour for me to be asked to perform and record first *Edda I* and now *Edda II*, particularly as I'm not from Iceland. When we recorded *Edda II* in April, I got to see the original book of poetry, which dates from the 13th century. To see that and to then perform the music it inspired was incredible. And to be based at the Harpa concert hall, with its views of the snow-topped mountains beyond – the very landscape described by both the poetry and the music – was marvellous.

**Your recording of Edda I was released in 2007. Edda II has been a long time coming!**

There's just the one manuscript by Jón Leifs, so it takes time to make a score and write out the individual parts (even though his handwriting is really clear). You also need brave singers to say, 'We think we should do this'. But luckily Schola Cantorum, who also sang in the previous recording, were prepared to take on the challenge. They were so dedicated – they lived for this project.

**You gave the world premiere of the piece in March, prior to the recording ...**

The live performance really helped us to prepare, and it was such a moving experience



Conductor Hermann Bäumer records Jón Leifs for BIS

for us all; at the end, the whole audience were on their feet. The performance was recorded for broadcast, and it was useful to refer to that when we were making the CD recording too. But it wasn't too challenging to recreate the atmosphere of the live concert – all the emotion is already there in the music, you just have to grab it with both hands. In fact, I think the choir found it easier recording it than performing it live; we planned the sessions so that we focused on the orchestra for certain periods, which allowed the choir to rest a bit. The duration is 75 minutes and the choir are singing for 65 of them, so they need tremendous energy to get to the end.

**Tell us about the four Nordic lurs, the ancient S-shaped bronze natural trumpets.**

They were played by French horn players, but the instrument isn't like a normal French horn – the sound goes up and out the front. It's a natural instrument so there are no valves, which makes it really difficult to get it in tune with the orchestra. But the players from the Iceland Symphony Orchestra did a really good job.

**So what will be the next stage of the recording process?**

I've known the producer, Ingo Petry, since high school, and it really benefited the musicians to know there was this non-verbal line of communication between producer and conductor. Ingo will do the first cut and send me the music, and then I'll hear it and make a list (he'll be hoping that list isn't too long!). Then he'll look at what he can change, and send me the second (and hopefully final) cut.

**What about Edda III, which Leifs didn't manage to complete?**

I went to the library and looked at the manuscript, and there are 212 pages – around 60 minutes of music for choir and orchestra! It's always been in my mind that if there are three parts, we should try and perform all three parts. Why not stop where the composer stops?



# ARTISTS & *their* INSTRUMENTS

## Menno van Delft on a 1784 Hoffmann clavichord



“The clavichord, like the piano and harpsichord, is a stringed keyboard instrument, but the essential difference is that the strings are not plucked like in a harpsichord, or hammered like in a piano, they are actually touched by little metal plates known as tangents. The interesting thing is that at the same time as you put energy into the strings to make them vibrate, you also keep the key depressed – only when the tangent is in contact with the string will you have the appropriate sound. It’s a bit like a violinist who puts his finger on the finger-board, and if he does that quite loudly you can hear a small sound – and the same principle is at work in the clavichord.

The instrument on which I’ve recorded the Bach Partitas is from 1784. The maker, Christian Gotthelf Hoffmann, was an apprentice with Friederici – a famous maker from Gera – and it is solidly in the central German clavichord-building tradition. The sound is definitely a little later than Bach, and the instrument is also strictly speaking a little larger than one would need for the Partitas, but it is very well restored, and beautifully strung. Of course ideally one would use an instrument built in 1730, but that doesn’t really exist. But from my wide experience as a clavichord player – and I’ve got a collection here myself of copies of all kinds of style and periods – this is definitely a very good example of what a clavichord in the 18th century sounds like. It has a beautiful, wonderful, singing ring-like tone in the treble – I was very enchanted by it. I played it a few times in concert and then we asked if it would be possible to make these recordings, which we made in the music-room in Hatchlands Park [near Guildford, UK, where the instrument is kept]. It’s quite difficult to record the clavichord because while it sounds perfectly smooth and singing in person, the danger is that when using mics you pick up too much of the mechanical aspect of the sound; in reality, it is really the sweetest of musical instruments.

Bach’s music can be played on several different instruments. But in half of the movements of the Partitas, the clavichord does have a spectacular option of getting deeper into the structure of the music, allowing the finest nuances one would like to make. Through the dynamics and flexibility of the clavichord you have that direct control over whatever you want to do.”

*Menno van Delft’s recording of Bach Partitas is available on Resonus, and will be reviewed next issue*

OPUS ARTE

## NEW RELEASES



### 1984 WATKINS Northern Ballet

Widely lauded by critics, choreographer Jonathan Watkins’ *1984* is an awe-inspiring retelling of George Orwell’s masterpiece. Danced by Northern Ballet – the UK’s foremost narrative ballet company – to a score by Tony-nominated composer Alex Baranowski. Winner of The South Bank Sky Arts Award for Dance 2016.

DVD | BLU-RAY



### LA CLEMENZA DI TITO MOZART Glyndebourne

Mozart’s final opera returns to Glyndebourne after an absence of nearly 20 years in a ‘stark, compelling and very well acted’ production directed by Claus Guth. Richard Croft sings the title role while Robin Ticciati ‘brings out the sheer beauty’ of Mozart’s score (Express).

DVD | BLU-RAY



### TRISTAN UND ISOLDE WAGNER Bayreuth Festival

This production of *Tristan und Isolde* stars leading Wagner exponents Robert Dean Smith and Iréne Theorin in the title roles, supported by the Bayreuth Festival Chorus and Orchestra conducted by Peter Schneider.

4 CD SET



### LOHENGRIN WAGNER Bayreuth Festival

The performance by Klaus Florian Vogt in the title role is staggering and impressive while conductor Andris Nelsons brings out the best in the festival chorus and orchestra. This *Lohengrin* one does not easily forget and puts Bayreuth back in the vanguard of Wagner interpretation.

3 CD SET

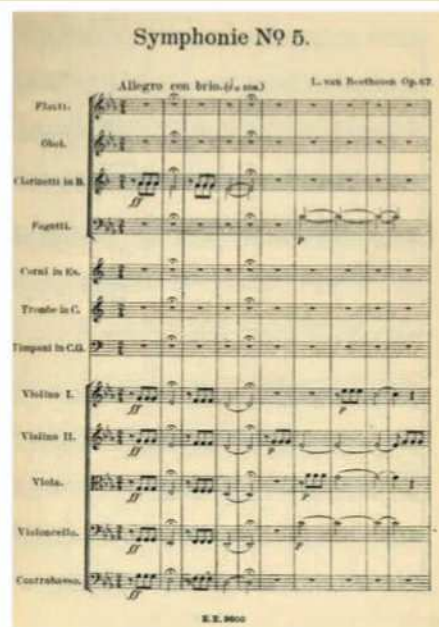
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# GRAMOPHONE GUIDE TO ...

# Symphony

**Richard Bratby** launches a new series outlining a definition and brief history of different musical forms



The opening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony (1808) is one of the most famous moments in all music

A large-scale orchestral work, usually in four movements, of which at least one is in sonata form.' My school textbook was reassuringly clear about what a symphony is. Fair enough, as far as it went. But as soon as I started exploring – and aren't all record collectors, by definition, explorers? – I got as far as Sibelius's three-movement Fifth before realising that 'as far as it went' wasn't anything like far enough. Back to the dictionary, then, and a question of semantics. *Sinfonia* means 'sounding together', and in early operas like Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* (1697) it described an instrumental interlude or introduction in a drama. (Most of us are familiar with the 'Pastoral Symphony' in Handel's *Messiah*, and Verdi described his discarded overture to *Aida* as a *sinfonia* as late as 1871.)

Baroque operatic *sinfonias* evolved into the multi-section Italian overture – try Handel's *Rinaldo* (1711) for an earlyish example; Mozart's Symphony No 32 (1779) for a late one – with slow and dance movements (often minuets) entering the mix. By the second half of the 18th century, when composers were regularly writing stand-alone orchestral symphonies (though even Haydn's 'London' Symphonies of 1791-95 were still described as 'overtures'), another concept comes into play. Hans Keller described it as 'the large-scale integration of opposites': the notion

of a symphony as a multi-part work that, through a purely musical argument, builds widely different ideas and emotions into something greater than the sum of their parts. Beethoven's nine symphonies are still regarded as the pinnacle.

## *It's hard to imagine two works less alike than Mahler's Eighth and Sibelius's Seventh*

But Beethoven was Beethoven – a tough act to follow. Schubert spun off into a whole new world in his 'Great' C major Symphony (1826). Schumann and Mendelssohn wrote no two symphonies alike; Brahms and Bruckner wrestled with the form for decades, and Berlioz – beginning with his *Symphonie fantastique* (1830) and culminating in the choral 'dramatic symphony' *Roméo et Juliette* (1839) – pushed in a different direction: the symphony as epic emotional drama. Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony (1893) made it unambiguously clear: those musical opposites could be integrated by overwhelming emotional power, as well as formal argument.

So at the start of the 20th century Gustav Mahler could declare to Jean Sibelius that 'The symphony must be like the world – it must embrace everything'. Sibelius had said that he admired the symphony's inner

logic, and it's hard to imagine two works less alike than Mahler's colossal Eighth (the 'Symphony of a Thousand' – 1907) and Sibelius's super-concentrated, single-movement Seventh (1924). But both are unmistakably symphonies, in a century when the very word could be a provocation. Stravinsky (*Symphonies of Wind Instruments* – 1920), Webern (1928) and Berio (*Sinfonia* – 1969) unpicked three centuries of symphonic tradition; Messiaen (*Turangalila-Symphonie* – 1948) and Bernstein (*Kaddish* – 1963) explored Mahler's limitless world.

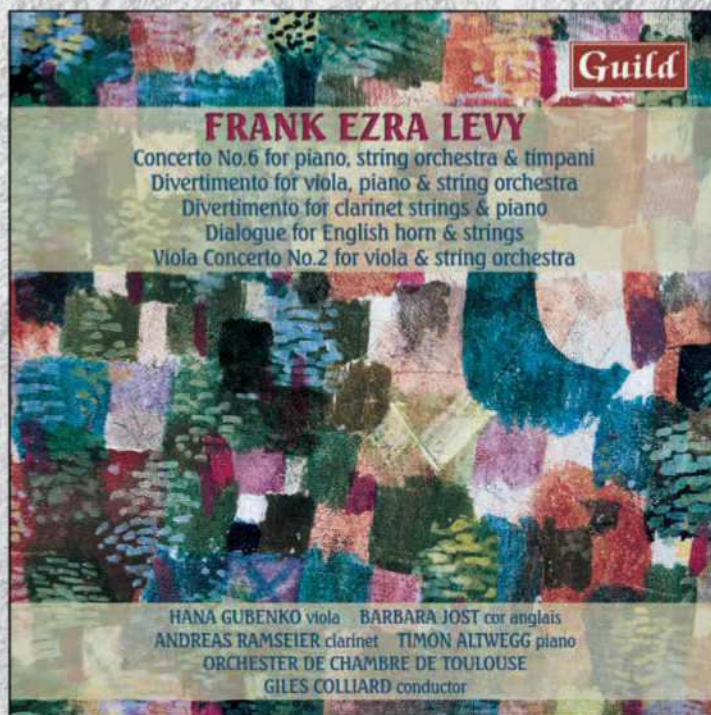
For others, however – from Shostakovich, Nielsen and Vaughan Williams to Aaron Copland, Michael Tippett and Bohuslav Martinů – symphonies were a very public affirmation of human values in a barbaric century. Hans Werner Henze used the symphony to interrogate his own musical heritage. 'The symphony lives!' declared an astonished Berlin newspaper after the premiere of Henze's Seventh in 1984, just months before John Adams's *Harmonielehre* rocketed into the Californian sky. Adams didn't call this a symphony, and that's understandable. Few musical terms carry such baggage. And to write a symphony, now as then, means engaging with Western music's most ambitious ongoing attempt to create meaning out of sound; declaring to the world that you have something important to say – and are about to deploy all your creative powers to say it. 6

► Listen to our Symphony playlist on Qobuz



# Guild

## NEW RELEASES FOR JUNE



Frank Ezra Levy (1930- 2017), was the son of the legendary Swiss pianist and composer, Ernst Levy. After emigrating to the U.S. in 1939, he studied Cello with, amongst others, Janos Starker and composed some 219 works while earning a living as a professional cellist. His tonal sound world encompassed some 13 symphonies, 17 string quartets and many other orchestral, vocal and chamber works and this CD is a fascinating introduction to his style.

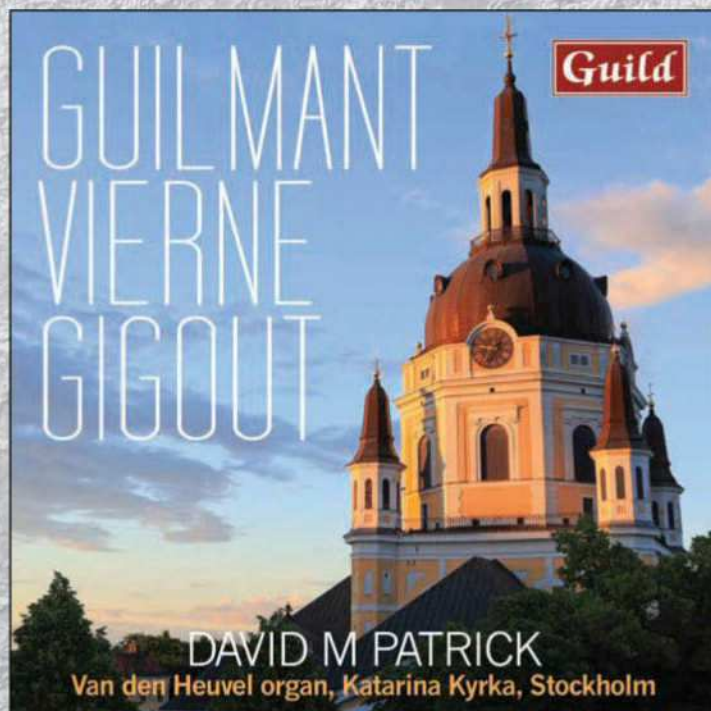
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# ORCHESTRA *Insight...*

## New York Philharmonic

Our monthly series telling the story behind an orchestra

**Founded** in 1842 as Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York, Inc

**Home** David Geffen Hall, Lincoln Center, New York City

**Music Director** Jaap van Zweden (from September 2018)

**Past Music Directors** (selected) Gustav Mahler (1909-11); Willem Mengelberg (1922-30), Arturo Toscanini (1928-36), John Barbirolli (1936-41), Artur Rodziński (1943-47), Dimitri Mitropoulos (1949-58), Leonard Bernstein (1958-69), Pierre Boulez (1971-77), Zubin Mehta (1978-91), Kurt Masur (1991-2002), Lorin Maazel (2002-09), Alan Gilbert (2009-2017)

'When you think of the New York Philharmonic you think of Leonard Bernstein.' So said one composer recently as he was about to hear America's oldest orchestra play a piece he'd written for them and what he perceived to be its characteristic sound. It is a sound made famous by Bernstein, music director from 1958 to 1969.

For many, Bernstein made the NYPO play the way it did and indeed does: with high precision, unusual responsiveness (for some conductors) and a heaviness that rarely cloy. But which came first: the orchestra's sound or Bernstein's unlocking of it?

The NYPO is older than its counterpart in Vienna. It was founded in 1842 but soon developed a penchant for charismatic music directors with celebrity appeal. Mahler, Mengelberg, Toscanini and Mitropoulos preceded Bernstein. In 1922, the orchestra began recording and broadcasting voraciously and has never stopped. The result is an archived testament to the fact that both pre- and post-Bernstein the ensemble apparently oscillated between maestros who focused on technique and those who got it to play from the heart.

History bears that theory out, repeating itself as it does so. Pierre Boulez followed Bernstein and focused on balance and precision. Lorin Maazel did the same before Alan Gilbert sought the same emotional authenticity as Bernstein – managing,



Jaap van Zweden becomes the New York Philharmonic's MD later this year

according to some critics, to smoothen and civilise its sound at the same time. Right now, the Orchestra sounds astonishingly agile across the board. Its strings have a machine-like power and precision, not exactly sumptuous but with colossal impact.

Milestone recordings by Willem Mengelberg (try his 1928 *Ein Heldenleben*) and Dimitri Mitropoulos (likewise, his 1951 *Wozzeck*) suggest those qualities were flickering, albeit inconsistently, all along. Bernstein's recordings of symphonies by Mahler and particularly Dvořák's *New World* have an honesty that can hardly be faulted. But sometimes, just sometimes, the NYPO's sonic depth and sharp technique has made it sound a little hollow.

Reporting on his experiences here-and-now, that same composer who spoke of Bernstein was surprised to meet an orchestra made up of 'young people: very cool and very good'. But as the Philharmonic takes on a new music director (from September), making its first recordings for many years in the process, Bernstein looms large. It was he who pushed that new music director, Jaap van Zweden, into conducting. **Andrew Mellor**  
► Listen to our special NYPO playlist on Qobuz



## RPS celebrates live music-making

The winners of the Royal Philharmonic Society Awards – the prestigious annual accolades given in recognition of achievement in live music-making – this year included The Sixteen, pianist Igor Levit, conductor Vladimir Jurowski and composers Mark-Anthony Turnage and James Dillon. Soprano Jessye Norman was given the RPS Gold Medal, the society's highest honour, whose previous recipients include Brahms, Bernstein and, more recently, Alfred Brendel and Martha Argerich. One of the highlights of the RPS Awards is the profile given to audience and engagement initiatives: you can hear more about these and all the winners in a special BBC Radio programme available to listen to for a month on the BBC iPlayer.

## Taiwan opens biggest arts centre

Taiwan is to open what it describes as the world's largest performing arts centre under one roof, in the city of Kaohsiung. Designed by Dutch architects Mecanoo, the National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts features five separate performance spaces over 35 acres, including a

2260 seat opera house, a 2000 seat concert hall, and 470 seat recital venue. Set in a 116-acre subtropical park, the spectacular-looking venue (pictured) will open its doors in October, with Gustavo Dudamel and the Berlin Philharmonic among the first performers.



A stunning development: the National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts

PHOTOGRAPHY: CHRIS LEE, IWAN BAAN



# FROM WHERE I SIT

## Why can't more opera houses welcome musical theatre onto their stages, asks Edward Seckerson



With the arrival of this column came the reinstatement of an important strand of repertoire in *Gramophone's* pages – Musical Theatre. As I have argued for some time – in these pages and elsewhere – Music Theatre (to use the catch-all phrase) comes in many guises and to exclude any one of them on the basis that it veers too close to 'pop' music is to deny the diversity of style and colour that makes it so special. The first cast album I reviewed for *Gramophone* was the Tony Award winner for 2017 *Dear Evan Hansen*, a dazzling score by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul belonging very much to the kinetic, high-tech, cyber world of today's popular culture. What could be further removed from the orgy of tap dancing and lush Broadway melodies (Harry Warren) of the 1930s originated *42nd Street* or the cool sophisticated period pastiche of Scott Frankel and Michael Korie's *War Paint* inspired by the cosmetic wars between Helena Rubinstein and Elizabeth Arden.

Our decision not to establish a separate category for these and other future show albums but rather to absorb them into the Vocal section of the magazine was a deliberate one. Indeed you could argue that Jake Heggie's 'operas' *It's a Wonderful Life* and *Great Scott* did not belong in the Opera section. Their heritage and lineage comes directly from the Broadway musical albeit cast in a higher-flown through-sung mode of expression.

It's an amazing time for diversity of style in 'musicals' on both sides of the pond. *Hamilton's* hip-hop, street poetry, storytelling, David Yazbek's middle-eastern infused charmer *The Band's Visit*, Jeanine Tesori's *Fun Home* (newly arrived at London's Young Vic while her dazzlingly original *Caroline, Or Change* plays at the Playhouse Theatre): these are shows, and scores, which dare to breakthrough the 'generic' sound world of contemporary show tunes and thoroughly inhabit a musical style and sound that springs directly (or obliquely) from the actual subject matter. Compare that to what is happening in the world of so-called contemporary opera where the musical language is so often at odds with the subject matter and where so many major commissions go to 'the usual suspects' whose musical syntax we know all too well.

Why can't opera houses great and small – and indeed subsidised theatres (I'll exclude the commercial West End for now) introduce a note of diversity into their commissions and tap into the enormous array of talent on the other side of the music theatre tracks? I think of Conor Mitchell from Northern Ireland whose music knows no boundaries and whose innate theatricality defies labelling. In the last couple of years alone I've enjoyed a wealth of innovative music theatre (in workshops and beyond) from talented composers and lyricists who make their own style rules. Richard Taylor's gloriously big-hearted *Flowers for Mrs Harris* gets a big Chichester platform this year; Tim Connor and Susan Pearse's *The Stationmaster*, Jason Carr and Ashley Robinson's *Lockhart*, Darren Clarke and Rhys Jennings's folk-infused *The Wicker Husband* are still awaiting that elusive mainstream production. Time to throw open closed doors and welcome them to the larger music theatre family. **G**

# NEW AND RECENT RELEASES ON ONDINE



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Focused: Salonen exiting the stage after a performance with the Philharmonia at the Royal Festival Hall in September 2017

# Ever-searching SALONEN

The composer-conductor continues to be driven forward by the glorious sound of the symphony orchestra and a deep curiosity about the world. As he approaches his 60th birthday, he tells **Andrew Farach-Colton** why he's more fearless and open-minded than ever before





**S**usanna Mälkki is rehearsing Debussy's *La mer* with the New York Philharmonic on a cold January morning. Esa-Pekka Salonen's *Helix* is up next, although the composer has yet to arrive as scheduled. At the last moment he bustles into David Geffen Hall at the Lincoln Center, good-naturedly curses subway delays, tosses his coat on a chair and nimbly hoists himself up on to the stage.

It's hard to believe that in a few months Salonen will be 60. Although he no longer looks quite as boyish as he did even at 50 (particularly now that he sports a close-cropped, silvery beard), he's as energetic as ever. The musicians greet him affectionately, stomping feet and clacking bows against music stands. Salonen has been composer-in-residence with the New York Philharmonic for three years, and the orchestra seems at home with both the man and his music. Aided by Mälkki's clear beat and succinct directives, the players take *Helix*'s gradually escalating complexity in their stride.

Then the players have a break, and Salonen and I retreat backstage to a dressing room. As we settle in, I mention that our

interview is taking place in the very hall where I first saw him in concert nearly two decades ago. He'd brought the Los Angeles Philharmonic to New York for what I vividly remember as a strikingly modern-sounding interpretation of Mahler's Third Symphony. And, of course, it was with this same Mahler symphony that he made his now-legendary debut with the Philharmonia Orchestra in London, filling in at extremely short notice for an indisposed Michael Tilson Thomas.

That was in 1983. At the time, the 25-year-old Finn considered himself a composer first and foremost; he conducted primarily to promote his own and his friends' music. That changed almost overnight. Within a few short years he'd become the Philharmonia's principal guest conductor, as well as chief conductor of the Swedish Radio orchestra. In 1992 he took the helm of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Over the course of his 17-year tenure in the City of Angels, he transformed the ensemble into what the *New Yorker*'s Alex Ross aptly described as 'the most intellectually lively orchestra in America', and spearheaded the construction of the Walt Disney Concert Hall, an acoustic marvel and the new epicentre of classical music on the West Coast of the United States. In 2008, Salonen returned to London and the Philharmonia, where he currently serves as principal conductor and artistic advisor. But there's a difference: he now ensures that there's time in his schedule to compose.

*'I don't think I can, or have tried, to separate my personality into isolated blobs. I'm the same person whether I'm composing or conducting'*

**T** rue composer-conductors have become increasingly rare. There are major composers who conduct, and do it well (John Adams, Thomas Adès and Matthias Pintscher, for example), and world-class conductors who dabble in composition, like Tilson Thomas. Salonen is the real deal, however, even if his output dwindled during the first phase of his conducting career. 'The simple explanation for this drought in the late '80s and early '90s', he tells me, 'would be that all of a sudden I was conducting around the world and had to learn the repertory. That's not completely true, however. I had an aesthetic crisis. Even if I'd had the time to write, I didn't know *what* to write. The move to LA actually opened it up for me. When I was young, I'd been trying to do the right thing, ideologically. I believed in the Adorno-esque idea of "new music for a new society"; the notion that complex serial music somehow makes people better. In LA, I was finally able to ask myself the simple question: how does music affect me? And, at the end of the day, isn't that the most important thing? It may sound stupid or banal, but I really was hit by this quite suddenly, and that day the ice broke, in a way. After that, things started happening quite rapidly. I wrote a series of pieces that established the new language that I felt was truly my own.'

To my ears, at least, Salonen's music seems tailor-made to his conducting style. The bold, dramatic gestures and the intricacy of detail work together to make the most of the immense sonic power of the modern orchestra. But, then again, didn't all the great composer-performers – from Marais to Mozart to Mahler – write to their strengths? 'I don't think I can, or have tried, to separate my personality into isolated blobs. I'm the same person whether I'm composing or conducting, and temperamentally I prefer certain things to others. In a way, you might say that

the dilemma I faced in LA was how to write pieces that somehow resemble the music I love as a performer. In the modernist dogma I grew up with, I wasn't "allowed" to write using the big sonorities of Strauss and Wagner, the rhythmic drive of Beethoven and Stravinsky, the melodic invention of Mahler and Ravel, or the multilayered orchestration of, say, *La mer*.'

The Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho has witnessed Salonen's artistic maturation from a close perspective, as they've been friends since he was 18. 'His early compositions, written when he was quite young, were intuitive, joyous, beautiful,' she tells me. 'Then he went through a more cerebral phase during his composition studies, when the beauty was often replaced by humour and clever ideas. Although he had less time to compose when he became a star conductor, it was during that period that his composing self clearly ripened. Starting with the *LA Variations*, he has found his expression as a composer that corresponds to his personality. From that point, too, we can recognise his experience as a conductor in his compositions, so that today, composer and conductor are one and the same. His music has those elements he brings alive when conducting: splendid orchestration, natural breathing, physical drive, humour and beauty.'

I ask Salonen about the most prominent composer-conductors of the previous generation, Bernstein and Boulez (musicians who couldn't be more different in terms of temperament and style) – as it strikes me that Salonen's own temperament fits somewhere between the two. 'It's interesting, because, of course, I was greatly influenced by Boulez when I was younger. I knew him well and he was very supportive of my work in the beginning. Bernstein I didn't have a strong or close personal connection with, sadly. But I do remember he came to Helsinki when I was a student and gave a concert with the Vienna Philharmonic. It was Brahms's First Symphony. The whole conducting class went to hear it, and it was amazing. He gave the illusion that he was improvising with the orchestra and out came Brahms's First. The following day we had a class with Arvids Jansons (Mariss's father), who was guest conducting in Helsinki. The first thing he said was, "Forget all that. Forget



Physical drive: Salonen's conducting reflects his music

you ever heard it or saw it. You cannot conduct Brahms like that, and you shouldn't even try." Now I understand why he said that, of course, because he was right; you *can't* start from there.'

Bernstein was Bernstein, in other words – and inimitably so. But Salonen makes it clear that Bernstein's spontaneity was only possible because he'd done his homework. 'He studied meticulously. It wasn't a make-it-up-as-you-go-along thing. He had completely absorbed and processed the music so that when he was standing on the box he felt that sense of freedom. Boulez, on the other hand, believed that the role of the conductor was to make sure that everything in the score was faithfully realised; anything else was a waste of time, and in some cases even detrimental. I was torn, because

I loved Bernstein's fire yet also appreciated how Boulez rescued a big chunk of the repertory, starting with the Second Viennese School – music that had been treated very badly. Boulez sorted all that out. But I honestly didn't know quite where I belonged.'

In any event, Salonen doesn't believe that faithfulness to the score, the way Boulez envisioned it, is an achievable goal. 'As a performer, you're making millions of decisions that are not all factual. What's a *mezzoforte* anyway? There's no absolute scale. No, to make these kinds of decisions you have to use your intuition.' This is particularly true of conducting, he argues. 'Look, you're standing in front of a hundred people who all come from different backgrounds and have their own opinions and feelings. Who's to say what's going on in their lives that particular day? And yet, for me, the *best* part of conducting – apart from being close to the music – is working with people. I love having time to compose, obviously, or I wouldn't do it. But if there's one thing I miss, it's the human interaction. I never tire of that emotional complexity as well as the sheer exhilaration I feel when a hundred talented musicians give their energy, their commitment, to make that sound. There's nothing like it.' The sound of a symphony orchestra, Salonen argues, is one of humanity's glorious achievements. 'Sure, maybe concerts of heavy metal music are louder, but with an orchestra you have moments where you're right at the border of sound

and total silence – *pianississimo* – and then you have the kind of insane *fortissimos* that hit you right in the stomach. Is there any other way to achieve this range? I don't think so.'

He continues: 'I remember when the Festival Présences Paris gave a retrospective of my work in 2011. They played practically all my pieces over the course of 10 days at the Châtelet. I sat through it and, frankly, got seriously depressed. It felt like: "This is your life, Mr Salonen; now you might just as well relax in your coffin." After the festival I flew to Chicago and went straight into a rehearsal of Bruckner's Seventh. I started conducting and the orchestra were playing like angels, of course.



In the control room of Salonen's digital project Re-Rite, installed in Lisbon's Museum of Design and Fashion in 2011



Somewhere about halfway through the first movement, I stopped. “Well, thank you,” I said. “Thank you so much.” They had no idea what I was talking about. “Look, it’s a very long story,” I told them, “but I wanted to thank you for making that sound, because that’s exactly what I needed.” I’d come out of this bewildering experience, following the course of my crazy life (my 30-year musical journey), to encounter the purity, simplicity and sheer beauty of Bruckner’s Seventh as played by a great orchestra. And I thought to myself: that *sound*! That’s a gift.’

And it’s a gift that Salonen is eager to share. What’s more, he’s found ingenious ways to do just that. ‘Esa-Pekka has such a vivid interest in the world around him,’ Saariaho tells me, an observation that’s echoed by American violinist Leila Josefowicz, one of Salonen’s frequent collaborators and the dedicatee of his Violin Concerto. ‘He really prides himself on being aware of what’s going on in the world,’ Josefowicz says. ‘He’s always reading, and reads widely. He’s also totally fascinated with technology.’ Through advertisements for Apple’s iPad, countless people with absolutely no interest in classical music have seen Salonen and heard snippets of his Violin Concerto. But it’s with the digital and virtual reality projects he’s developed with the Philharmonia Orchestra that he’s opened up brand new vistas in music appreciation.

‘The first major digital project I did with the Philharmonia was *Re-Rite* in 2009, using Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*,’ he says. ‘That was the pilot. The idea was to do something that allowed one to get inside a symphony orchestra and an iconic work. Music is sometimes harder to cope with than, say, the visual arts simply because you can’t reverse time. You can spend as much or as little time as you want looking at a painting. You can move closer in or further out. You can go and have a coffee and come back. But music just goes by. Time flows on, and if you miss something, well, that’s it. The only way to get to grips with a piece of music is repeated listening until you know it well enough that you can start to understand how it hangs together. My idea was to somehow break down that temporality and let people experience music as they would an art exhibition, so you *can* go back if you want. You can walk through the installation in eight minutes or you can stay for four hours. You can play along with the score, or try conducting if you want – things that are otherwise



Salonen and the LA Phil enjoy an ‘affectionate’ rapport

*‘Music can be harder to cope with than visual arts because you can’t reverse time. If you miss something, well, that’s it’*

just as it would in real life. In the Philharmonia office we’ve been experimenting with a very powerful loudspeaker array so that you’re entirely surrounded, bombarded from every direction. The headset is used only for the visuals; the audio comes from the loudspeakers. This was a kind of breakthrough, because it allows what you hear to follow the movement of your ears. And I’ve been extremely excited about going to this festival, too, because I’m a bit of a techie and a nerd and so am curious to see what else is on offer.’

Salonen’s interests range beyond the world of the arts and technology too. Saariaho remembers him being politically active, even as a teenager. ‘Since that time he’s always been ready to defend important causes and initiate cultural projects,’ she says. The Baltic Sea Festival, now in its 16th year, is a prime example. ‘This festival is important to me for many reasons,’ says Salonen. ‘First, it’s where I grew up. As a kid, I was never far from the shores of the Baltic. It’s also my connection with Stockholm, where I lived for many years; my first major conducting gig was with the Swedish Radio orchestra. We started discussing plans for this festival back in 1999, when the environmental problems of the Baltic were not widely known. At that time, the Russians were not at all interested in environmental issues, and the Baltic States had declared independence relatively recently, so they had their hands full with other issues. The first part of the Baltic Sea where the environmental



Leila Josefowicz playing the premiere of Salonen’s Violin Concerto in LA in 2009

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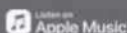
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problems became really evident was the Gulf of Finland – the area between the Finnish peninsula, the Baltic States and St Petersburg on the eastern corner. We were experiencing sudden and violent algae growths, where the water turned into this yellowish porridge for as far as the eye could see. It's a complex issue, but basically it's the result of too much phosphorus in the sediment of the Gulf turning into nitrogen, which fertilises the algae. And at a certain point, when the conditions are right, there's nothing that can control it.

'I remember I was at my country house, and took my daughters (who were little at the time) for a morning swim off the pier. As soon as I saw the water, I told them: "I'm sorry, but we can't swim." They asked why, and I started to explain. My oldest daughter said surely this shouldn't be allowed and that those who caused the pollution should be punished. I didn't have an argument for this. I told her she was right but that it's not that simple. Maybe my response – "it's not that simple" – was the typical one, meaning that it's too complex, beyond my control, so therefore I do nothing. And I thought, well, instead of doing nothing, I can do *something* that's within my realm. That's when I had the idea for a music festival with an environmental angle. Later that summer I met up with Valery Gergiev in St Petersburg, and over a very late dinner we came to the conclusion that this was the right time to start a festival together.'

What emerged was an annual event that has continued to hold its own against a backdrop of political strife. 'The Baltic region has always been a troubled part of the world because of the clash of cultures and political systems,' Salonen explains. 'It's been the stage for lots of conflicts and has a bloody history, although there have also been long periods of prosperity based on trade and cosmopolitan thinking. And, remember, this was back in 1999 during the early Russian years. Yes, Yeltsin was a loose cannon, but anything seemed possible, so starting a dialogue about environmental issues while forging new alliances, making new friends and collaborating with old friends felt like a very natural thing to do. I guess we were naive, but who could predict what the geopolitical situation would be today? The rosy optimism of the late '90s and early 2000s has been replaced by a very bleak, realpolitik outlook. Yet, in a way, the festival is one of the few things that still functions well as a forum for all the countries involved. Beyond its symbolic value, the festival has concrete cultural and political value in the sense



Outside LA's sleek Walt Disney Concert Hall, which Salonen helped bring to fruition

that, despite the turbulence and volatility, it brings people together from all corners of the Baltic region and beyond to sit down together at dinners and panel discussions and have a conversation.'

*'I've learnt a lot. Keep your curiosity about the world, because the moment you lose it you may as well be in your coffin'*

Salonen's children – he has three – are now young adults. They're all familiar with classical music, he says, although none are following in his footsteps. But he's fine with that. 'My oldest is into various kinds of metal, and a very particular style called "noise". I'd say I know more about noise and black metal music than the average conductor in his sixties.' He smiles wryly. 'Then again, a lot of that music is not so different from what Stockhausen was doing in his Cologne studio in 1956 and '57 – works like *Kontakte* and *Gesang der Jünglinge*. In fact, those are now iconic pieces for young people into noise.'

Salonen sits quietly for a few moments. 'I think when you're in your teens and early twenties, it helps to have a tribal identity – and your taste in music can be a big part of that. The cliché is that young people are open-minded and that a person's horizon narrows as they get older. But that's not right. In fact, it's completely the other way around. Now that I'm approaching my sixties, I'm more open than I ever was. I've learnt a lot over the years. I've learnt that life is short, so don't waste time. Look around. Keep your curiosity going, because the moment you lose your curiosity about the world, that's it; you might as well be resting in your coffin. I've learnt that the concept of right and wrong can be problematic – and lately we've discovered that the concept of "truth" can also be incredibly challenging.' He laughs. 'But, really, most things end up between the extremes. Few things are black or white; most exist in a grey area. A young person wants clarity: I'm like this, not that. I'm for this, and against that. It takes time to realise – and to admit – that you don't actually know. And once you accept that, life becomes so much more enjoyable.'

► To read Rob Cowan's review of the recent 61-disc release 'Esa-Pekka Salonen: The Complete Sony Recordings' turn to page 94



The long perspective: approaching 60, Salonen is 'more open' than he ever was





Parry at Highnam Court in Gloucester;  
he inherited the property in 1896



# IN PRAISE OF PARRY 100 YEARS ON

Long regarded with indifference or even scorn, the British composer – who died 100 years ago this October – is finally receiving the acknowledgement he deserves, writes Parry scholar **Jeremy Dibble**

There was a time, some 40 years ago, when the music of Sir Hubert Parry was known only by a handful of works. *Blest pair of sirens* was a favourite of many choral societies (and still is). The coronation anthem *I was glad* – surely the greatest ceremonial piece ever composed – was a staple, especially for occasions of pomp and ceremony, alongside the late cycle of six motets, the *Songs of Farewell*, the choral song *Jerusalem* and the hymn ‘Dear Lord and Father of mankind’ (posthumously extracted from Parry’s first oratorio *Judith*). After Parry’s death in October 1918, his music might have slipped into oblivion were it not for the few who championed him, such as Vaughan Williams, Adrian Boult, Herbert Howells and Gerald Finzi. The centenary of Parry’s birth in 1948 passed with a whimper. An almost apologetic editorial article for *The Musical Times* in February 1948 made the following statement: ‘No doubt there are a number of *Blest pairs*, but further performances of a much-performed work scarcely qualifies as a centenary observance. Nor does *Jerusalem* by a school choir, even though in the intentions of those taking part it may be the equivalent of a whole Parry festival. What constitutes general indifference is the fact that, as far as we know, the main choral forces of the country, even under the instigation of a centenary, have decided not to risk a single work from those [choral pieces] named [later in the article].’

In this parlous situation, criticism of Parry’s music was self-perpetuatingly negative. Based on the reality that few had a chance to hear his works beyond those latterly mentioned, a scornful attitude was a safer refuge. Little changed until the 1970s, when Boult recorded Parry’s *Overture to an Unwritten Tragedy*, *Lady Radnor’s Suite*, *An English Suite* and the magnificent *Symphonic Variations* for Richard Itter’s

pioneering Lyrita label. A later CD compilation also included the ‘Bridal March’ from his incidental music for Aristophanes’s *The Birds*, which was played at the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip in 1947 (the whole orchestral suite has now been recorded on Chandos). An even more inspired decision of Boult’s was to record Parry’s Fifth Symphony, the *Elegy for Brahms* and the *Symphonic Variations* at the very end of his career in 1979 (EMI). I was a student at Cambridge at the time and the effect of hearing Parry’s rich orchestration, the momentum of his generous and passionate themes, and the

sheer intellectual brilliance of his structural thinking, especially in the cyclic form of the Fifth Symphony, was not only thrilling but life-changing. As Trevor Harvey commented in these

*‘His music feels like his mature photographs look: calm, liberal, generous and easygoing, but with a twinkle in the eye!’ – Adrian Partington*

pages in November 1979, ‘[Parry] employs an orchestra that is roughly Brahms-sized and organises his music symphonically in much the same way: but his themes and harmonic language are entirely his own.’ In fact, there is much in the Fifth, and indeed in the brooding *Elegy for Brahms*, that reveals a more complex, personal amalgamation of Brahms and Wagner that would not have been possible in a bifurcated Germany, irreconcilably divided as it was between the ‘classicists’ and the ‘progressivists’. It is this stylistic fusion of ‘classical’ Brahms and ‘romantic’ Wagner that makes Parry’s music so interesting and individual. The manner of the Fifth Symphony’s structural compression is something Brahms never attempted, and Parry takes the concept of ‘developing variation’ to a new level of sophistication commensurate with the thinking of Schoenberg’s Op 7 Quartet and Op 9 Chamber Symphony. The *Elegy for Brahms* (which Andrew Davis conducted so sympathetically at the 2010 Proms) is also a symphonic movement of great originality, and while it clearly pays tribute to Brahms in its second subject,

much of the animated material, perhaps ironically, indeed derives from the rhetoric of Wagner. Yet, as the piece moves to its conclusion in the radiant coda, it is Parry's optimism that shines through.

### PARRY, THE SYMPHONIST

As a symphonist Parry has certainly undergone a serious reappraisal in the past 30 years. Matthias Bamert recorded all the symphonies on the Chandos label between 1990 and 1992, but there have been others. The First Symphony is also available with William Boughton and the English Symphony Orchestra on Nimbus, coupled with the late symphonic poem *From Death to Life*, while Naxos issued a spritely and exciting interpretation of the Second Symphony, known as the 'Cambridge', with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra under Andrew Penny. The Third Symphony has recently received performances under Howard Shelley with the Ulster Orchestra, and also under Gennady Rozhdestvensky with the Cappella of Russia State Symphony Orchestra; and Vassily Sinaisky conducted the Fifth at the Proms in July 2010. This year, two masters of the English orchestral repertoire – Martyn Brabbins and Sir Andrew Davis – will conduct the

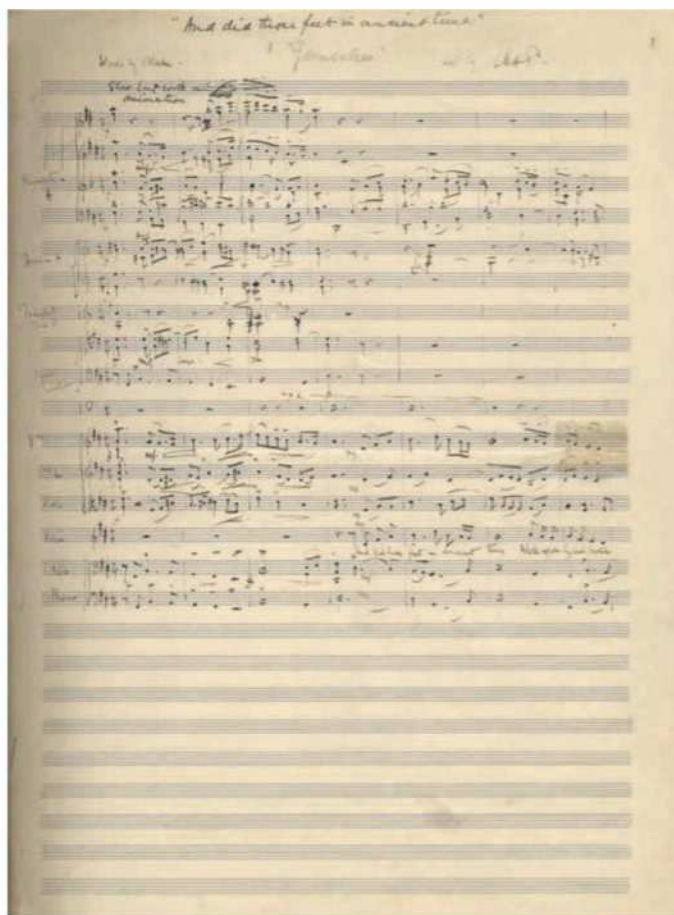


Reappraisal: the calibre of Parry's music is being recognised

Fifth at the Proms on July 25 and The Three Choirs Festival at Hereford on August 2 respectively. When I speak to Brabbins, who made a pioneering recording of Parry's Piano Concerto with Piers Lane in 1995 for Hyperion, he expresses a love of the composer's 'sincerity and honesty' in the pages of his symphonic music. But foremost among Brabbins's impressions are the true passion, emotional content and concentrated thought of the Fifth. 'I would love to record a cycle of the Parry symphonies rather than another of Brahms!' he exclaims. 'With only two recordings of the Fifth there is so much to explore, reveal and recalibrate in our approach to this composer.'

Conductor Rumon Gamba is equally frank when I speak to him. With the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Gamba recently made premiere recordings of the original version of Parry's Fourth Symphony, the

charming miniature ballet *Proserpine* (written for Ina Pelly in 1912, for whom Elgar wrote *The Sanguine Fan*) and movements from the *Suite Moderne*; the recording is due out on Chandos in October. 'The British symphonic tradition starts with Parry,' Gamba says emphatically, drawing attention to the first four of Parry's symphonies composed during the 1880s, well before



Meticulous markings: the original manuscripts of two Parry works – the incidental music for Aristophanes's play *The Birds*, and the rousing opening to *Jerusalem*



Elgar came on the scene. Much of what strikes Gamba about the first version of the Fourth Symphony (which Richter conducted in London in 1889) is how different the work is from the revised version of 1909-10. 'It is beautifully and boldly orchestrated, with its own sound world and sense of inner conflict,' he remarks. 'There is nothing of George Bernard Shaw's "buttoned-up" professor here. This red-blooded music is daring, even angular, and its five movements must have been challenging for its audience. The revision seems much safer than the original.' In *Proserpine*, Gamba avers that we see 'quite a different side to the composer in its gossamer scoring and delicate textures' as well as its theatrical imagery.

### EMBRACING THE CHORAL TRADITION

If Parry's standing as a symphonist has been reassessed, then his reputation as a choral composer has also undergone some considerable re-evaluation over the past 40 years. Choral music was in Parry's DNA. A 'son' of The Three Choirs Festival (his father was a guarantor for the Gloucester Festival for many years), he grew up to appreciate the democratic values of singing en masse. But even though he had been educated in the organ loft under Sir George Elvey at St George's Chapel, Windsor, and achieved his BMus at Oxford as the youngest successful candidate, Parry did not see his future in church music. Looking instead to the more ambitious possibilities of large-scale choral music, he selected for his first Gloucester commission extracts from Shelley's prose poem, *Prometheus Unbound*. Fresh from his experiences of the *Ring* cycle at Bayreuth in 1876, and spurred on by his mentor, Edward Dannreuther (Wagner's champion in England), he radically embraced Wagner in his cantata *Scenes from Prometheus*

*'Parry's choral music is now an entirely identifiable English style at the end of the 19th century'* – James O'Donnell

*Unbound* (1880), which many later commentators such as Ernest Walker, Henry Colles and Henry Hadow identified as the birthday of modern English music. While with hindsight this may be an exaggeration, those who heard a BBC studio performance of *Prometheus* – given on the 100th anniversary of the work in 1980 by Vernon Handley, the BBC Symphony Orchestras and BBC Singers – were astonished to hear the vibrancy and audacity of Parry's score. *Prometheus* may be an inchoate work, but it points the way to those elements of Wagner that surface in Parry's later works such as the heady setting of *The Lotos-Eaters* (Chandos) and his second oratorio *Job* (Hyperion), admired by Boult and Vaughan Williams. An unequal work, *Job* nevertheless reveals how Parry had imbibed the self-examining Wagnerian characters of Wotan and Hans Sachs in the profoundly moving 'Lamentations'.

Parry's appreciation of Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem* and *Das Schicksalslied* undoubtedly influenced his second important choral commission for Gloucester, *The Glories of Our Blood and State* (1883). Now recorded for the first time (Chandos), this brooding funeral ode reminds us of the seismic change that English music was undergoing in the 1880s.

After the completion of the piece, Parry felt confident enough to tackle an opera and, encouraged by the series of commissions for English operas instigated by Carl Rosa at Drury Lane, he opted for the Arthurian story of *Gwenivere*. It proved to be an error of judgment: his librettist, Una Taylor, was a poor choice,

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Jeremy Dibble conducted Parry at Durham Cathedral in February; Prince Charles – here greeting Sir Thomas Allen, who performed at the event – was in attendance

and his own practical knowledge of the stage was inadequate. Rosa turned it down and, despite Stanford's efforts to interest impresarios on the European continent, it was abandoned and left in the form of a manuscript piano score. There are two recordings of scenes from the opera: one from Act 1 scene 4, where Guenever is rescued from burning by Lancelot (with Susan Gritton, on Dutton), and 'Arthur's Farewell' from the final scene of Act 2 (Roderick Williams and Ailish Tynan, also on Dutton), both of which I orchestrated; they suggest that the opera contained a good deal of impressive music demonstrating a highly individual voice. Happily, the crushing disappointment of *Guenever* (1884-86) had the significant effect of throwing into relief the spectacular success of *Blest pair of sirens* (1887), a work in which Parry fully discovered a true assimilation of Wagner, Brahms, his love of JS Bach (which was to surface in his book on the composer in 1909) and the heritage of diatonic English cathedral music (from SS Wesley and Stainer).

This somewhat complex stylistic matrix would emerge in so many of Parry's later choral works such as his 1888 oratorio

*Judith* (which received a fine performance in Toronto in May 2015 under Stephanie Martin), along with *L'Allegro ed Il Pensieroso* (1890), *De Profundis* (1891), his setting of the *Magnificat* (1897 – Chandos), the *Ode on the Nativity* (1912 – Lyrita), arguably his masterpiece, and the fine double-choir anthem *God is our hope* (1913), as yet unrecorded but due to be broadcast for the first time on BBC Radio 3 in September [see 'Parry Remembered' in our Events listings on page 29]. Adrian Partington, who recently conducted two performances of the *Ode on the Nativity* in Gloucester and at London's Festival Hall, is in no doubt about Parry's choral-writing skills. 'What impresses me most about Parry's *Ode*, and other larger choral works, is his sense of musical architecture,' he tells me. 'In verse six of the work

he sustains a feeling crescendo for around five minutes and when the climax arrives it is breathtaking. I have always appreciated the spaciousness of Parry's musical paragraphs; nothing is rushed or trivial. His music feels like his mature photographs look: experienced, calm, liberal, generous, easygoing, and kind, but with a twinkle in the eye.'

Conductor James O'Donnell is happy to add to this vivid impression. 'Parry's choral music, along with that of Stanford's, is now an entirely identifiable English style at the end of the 19th century,' he tells me – a comment borne out by the spacious manner of O'Donnell's recording with the Westminster Abbey Choir recently made with Hyperion of *I was glad, Hear my words, ye people* (1894), the 'Great' Service in D (1881), *Blest pair* and the magisterial *Coronation Te Deum* (1911). The *Te Deum*, an expansive 'fantasy' based on 'O God, our help in ages past' and *The Old Hundredth* has also been magnificently recorded under Neeme Järvi and the BBC NOW and Chorus (Chandos), and under Robert King with authentic instruments (Vivat). The work belongs to that Indian Summer of creativity in the final years of Parry's life, which included his last work for chorus and orchestra, the deeply elegiac *Chivalry of the Sea* of 1916 (Dutton), and the epithetical cycle of six motets, *Songs of Farewell* (1916-18), which have received some truly memorable recordings over the years. It would be wonderful if Richard Marlow's ruminative interpretation, issued on the Conifer label in 1987, could be made available once again, though the recording by Nigel Short and Tenebrae on Signum Classics fully embodies the power and pathos of Parry's valedictory sentiment. Robert Quinney, Director of the Choir of New College, Oxford, recently embarked upon a new recording of the *Songs of Farewell* and other choral works, to be released on Novum on August 1. 'I see Parry as a great figure in the European tradition,' he tells me, 'a composer who synthesised the neo-Bachian counterpoint of Mendelssohn and Brahms with a unique flair for the English language.'



That is why our recording of the *Songs of Farewell* is preceded by the *Sechs Sprüche* by Mendelssohn – six short motets, the language and textures of which are immediately discernible in Parry's writing.' He continues: 'The *Songs of Farewell* are really part-songs, even the apparently solemn final motet, "Lord, let me know mine end". In our performances, we try to bring a flexibility and nuance not always associated with ecclesiastical choirs and sacred repertory.'

### TACKLING THE SMALL-SCALE

While the archetypal Parry can be found in his symphonic and large-scale choral works, we should not ignore his prowess for chamber music which, encouraged by Dannreuther's pioneering and highly catholic concerts at his home in Orme Square, Bayswater, he exercised with considerable fertility in the first phase of his maturity between 1876 and 1893. One of the first important recordings of Parry's chamber works was of the violin sonatas performed by Erich Gruenberg and Roger Vignoles (Hyperion) and this has been complemented by CDs of the String Quartet in G and String Quintet in E flat with the Bridge Quartet (EMR). We also anticipate the release of two more important recordings: the complete music for violin and piano from Rupert Marshall-Luck and Duncan Honeybourne on EM Records, recorded in 2016 and due for release later this year; and the first of two volumes of the big-boned piano trios from the Leonore Trio on Hyperion, due for release towards the end of the year. In addition, a double CD of the three string quartets and the Scherzo in C (my own completion) from the Archaeus Quartet on MPR has just been released [to be reviewed in these pages next month].

Parry possessed a natural intellectual ability for large-scale instrumental thought, but we should also not ignore his fecund imagination as a miniaturist. As examples of his neo-Baroque preoccupations, we need look no further than the chorale preludes and fantasias (sympathetically recorded by James Lancelot on the organ of Durham Cathedral – Priory) and the two works *Lady Radnor's Suite* (1894) and the posthumously published *English Suite* which stand at the vanguard of England's rich tradition of works for string orchestra (Lyrita). And then there is Parry the songwriter. His 12 volumes of *English Lyrics*, written between c1874 and 1918, pointed the way forward in the art and idiom of English song. Janet Baker was an early standard-bearer of this repertoire; her vibrant performances of 'O mistress mine' and 'Proud Maisie' with Gerald Moore are still available on Warner Classics. Robert Tear and Philip Ledger produced a groundbreaking selection of 20 of the *English Lyrics* on Argo in 1979 (now available on Decca – 'The British Music Collection') which provided the only major insight into Parry's art until Stephen Varcoe and Clifford Benson brought a new and compellingly expressive manner to this treasure of material (Hyperion, 1998). Now, as a major testament to Parry's status as one of Britain's greatest composers of art song, Somm is releasing the complete *English Lyrics*, with recognised masters of the idiom, Susan Gritton, James Gilchrist, Roderick Williams, Sarah Fox and Andrew West (piano). Volume 2 has just been released, with the third and final volume due out at the end of the year. 'These songs are well-crafted and full of variety,' the baritone Roderick Williams tells me. 'With their fluent gift for melody, they are always a joy to sing.' According to him, many seem 'painfully biographical', as if Parry turned to song to express loneliness, lost love and underlying passion, sentiments we have been slow to associate with a composer sometimes thought to be

mawkishly Victorian. 'There is nothing sentimental about "Nightfall in Winter",' Williams affirms. That is equally true of such finely sculpted lyrics as 'To Althea from Prison', 'Under the greenwood tree', 'Looking Backward' or Parry's captivating 'lullaby' interpretation of 'Weep you no more, sad fountains'. The latter also appears on an album of English songs on Chandos from Sarah Connolly and Joseph Middleton [see our Proms listings overleaf], due for release in July.

### CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

It would almost be a truism to say that, in this centenary year of Parry's death, our impression of his music is entirely different from what it once was. Changing tastes, as well as our rejection of once-accepted prejudices, have contributed to this altered view, and to our willingness to question the composer's much-quoted detractors, such as Shaw and (Ernest) Newman. Yet, much of our readiness to appreciate Parry's art must be

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Parry's symphonies show that there was a vibrant tradition in England well before Elgar. Especially fine are the Third Symphony and the revised version of the Fourth, while the shorter and more concentrated Fifth is, arguably, the British composer's orchestral masterpiece. The *Symphonic Variations* (1897) are a fine example of variations shaped as a four-movement symphony. Bamert identifies with the spaciousness of this music.



**Magnificat. Coronation Te Deum. The Glories of Our Blood and State. The Birds Suite.**

England. Jerusalem

Amanda Roocroft *sop* BBC National Orchestra of Wales / Neeme Järvi  
Chandos (12/12)

This reveals a broader range of Parry's choral music beyond *Blest pair of sirens* and *I was glad*. *Jerusalem* and *England* are heard with Parry's own orchestrations. An added bonus is the orchestral suite of Parry's incidental music to *The Birds*, which includes the famous 'Wedding March'.



**Violin Sonatas. 12 Short Pieces**

Erich Gruenberg *vn*  
Roger Vignoles *pf*  
Hyperion Helios

(11/85)

Parry's unjustly neglected chamber music is bursting with high-quality invention. The violin sonatas, particularly the one in D major, are fine examples of his more intimate instrumental music, while the *12 Short Pieces* are delicious miniatures.



**English Lyrics**

Susan Gritton *sop*  
James Gilchrist *ten*  
Roderick Williams *bar* Andrew West *pf*

Somm (12/15)

Parry was a brilliant pioneer of the modern English song idiom. This recording, featuring three stellar soloists, bears witness to the emotional range of the *English Lyrics*, the very 'English' sound of the genre and the range of poetry that captured Parry's imagination.



**Songs of Farewell**

Tenebrae / Nigel Short  
Signum (12/11)

Arguably some of the finest unaccompanied European choral music in the repertoire, Parry's *Songs of Farewell* are performed with true pathos and precision here by Tenebrae under Nigel Short. These powerful motets provide a window into Parry's soul.



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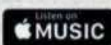
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STAY IN THE KNOW





ascribed to the prevalence of recordings, which has not only provided us with the opportunity to hear Parry's music in performances of conviction and clarity, but also to understand the breadth of his art (which reaches far beyond the somewhat narrow perception of the ceremonial and patriotic) and the extent of his influence on figures such as Vaughan Williams, Holst, Gurney, Bliss, Howells, Finzi and Walton. For the man in the street he remains, as the Prince of Wales commented in 'The Prince and the Composer' (the BBC documentary film), 'the most famous *unknown* composer in this country',

or, in other words, the nameless author of favourite hymns, choral music and our putative English national anthem *Jerusalem*. But for many, his national (indeed international) profile and status has changed fundamentally. Perhaps we can credit William McNaught, Editor of *The Musical Times*, with a gift for foresight when we now read his words of February 1948: 'Where will Parry be in 2018, the centenary of his death? It would be rash to prophesy; but we may feel certain that he will be recognised as one of the principal characters in our musical history.' ⑥

## YOUR GUIDE TO THE VERY BEST PARRY EVENTS IN 2018

Celebrate the man and his music across a host of concerts, festivals and exhibitions

### Parry: Musician and Literary Man

#### Royal College of Music

June/July

A fascinating exhibition hosted on the RCM's website that celebrates Parry's remarkable contribution as a composer to the cultural life of his country, the focus being on his connection with literature, poetry and history. The majority of materials featured - manuscripts, letters and portraits - belong to the Collection at the Royal College of Music Library. It is hoped that a physical version of the exhibition will be displayed at the Royal College of Music this autumn.

[rcm.ac.uk](http://rcm.ac.uk)

### Parry Centenary Concert

#### Kendal Parish Church

July 14, 7.30pm

Performed by the Cumbria Festival Chorus and Orchestra under Ian Jones, this centenary programme intersperses music by Brahms (*Schicksalslied*, *Nänie* and *Haydn Variations*) and Parry - his *Elegy for Brahms*, *Magnificat* and *Blest pair of sirens*, culminating in two rousing anthems: *I was glad* and *Jerusalem*.

[cumbriafestivalchorus.co.uk](http://cumbriafestivalchorus.co.uk)

### Parry at the Proms

#### Royal Albert Hall and other venues in London

July to September

Parry takes centre stage at the Proms this year, owing both to his own centenary and to that of the end of the First World War. Highlights include: his hope-filled Fifth Symphony, part of a programme also featuring music by Parry pupils Vaughan Williams and Holst, all performed by BBC NOW under Martyn Brabbins (July 27, 7pm,

broadcast on BBC Four); and *Blest pair of sirens*, performed by the BBC SO, Chorus and Singers under Sir Andrew Davis as part of the Last Night celebrations (September 8, 7.15pm, broadcast live on BBC One and Two). In addition, Parry features in two 'Proms at Cadogan Hall' lunchtime concerts: a recital by Sarah Connolly and Joseph Middleton of works by composers associated with the RCM, where Parry was once Director - including Parry's 'Weep you no more, sad fountains' (August 6); and *Songs of Farewell*, performed by the BBC Singers under Sakari Oramo (August 20). Finally, in the first ever 'Proms at Alexandra Palace' on September 1 at 3pm, the BBC Singers and Concert Orchestra under Jane Glover perform excerpts from Parry's *The Birds* alongside music by Vaughan Williams, Coleridge-Taylor and Sullivan. All Proms are broadcast live on BBC Radio 3.

[proms.co.uk](http://proms.co.uk)

### Tenebrae: WW1 Centenary

#### Hereford Cathedral

July 30, 2.45pm

Tenebrae's programme reflects on the final year of the First World War centenary and features composers connected to the Three Choirs Festival. The most substantial work on the programme, Parry's *Songs of Farewell*, sits alongside Elgar, Gurney, Schoenberg and Rasch - whose work *A Foreign Field* was commissioned to mark the start of the centenary.

[3choirs.org](http://3choirs.org)

### A Parry Centenary Tribute

#### Hereford Cathedral

August 2, 7.45pm

One of the highlights of the 2018 Three Choirs Festival, this Parry

celebration features the sublime *Blest pair of sirens*, the triumphant Symphony No 5, and *Invocation to Music*, penned 'in honour of Henry Purcell'. Sir Andrew Davis oversees proceedings, along with the Philharmonia Orchestra and the Three Choirs Festival Chorus. Earlier in the day, there's a breakfast presentation at the Powell Theatre by Michael Trott, author of *Hubert Parry: A Life in Photographs*, which explores the development of both the man and the musician.

[3choirs.org](http://3choirs.org)

### 'Parry Remembered' at the Charles Wood Festival and Summer School

#### St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral Armagh, Northern Ireland

August 12-19

David Hill conducts the Charles Wood Singers. Highlights include: Choral Evensong on August 15 at 5pm, featuring 'My soul, there is a country' and Responses by Jeremy Dibble after Parry, plus a Candlelight Concert at the Catholic Cathedral at 8.15pm on the same day, featuring the complete *Songs of Farewell*; a performance of Parry's *God is our hope* as part of Choral Evensong on August 16 at 5pm (to be broadcast on BBC Radio 3 on September 5 at 3.30pm); and Festal Evensong on August 19 at 5pm, culminating in *I was glad*.

[charleswoodsummerschool.org](http://charleswoodsummerschool.org)

### Parry Memorial Evensong

#### Gloucester Cathedral

October 7, 3pm

Led by Director of Music Adrian Partington, Gloucester Cathedral Choir sing an all-Parry Evensong to commemorate the 100th



Parry's music features at the 2018 Proms

anniversary of the composer's death. Music includes 'My soul, there is a country' (from *Songs of Farewell*), his 'Great' Service in D and the anthem *Hear my words, ye people*. Responses are by Jeremy Dibble on themes by Parry. After the service, the choir will process to Parry's memorial in the south nave aisle and sing 'There is an old belief' (also from *Songs of Farewell*). The service will be repeated on October 10 at 3.30pm and broadcast live on BBC Radio 3.

[gloucestercathedral.org.uk](http://gloucestercathedral.org.uk)

### Oxford Lieder Festival: Parry Centenary

#### Sheldonian Theatre, Holywell Music Room, New College Chapel & other venues in central Oxford

October 19, 10.30am-10pm

A day of events marking the centenary of Parry's death including recitals by James Gilchrist, Anna Tilbrook, the Choir of New College, Oxford, Mary Bevan and others, talks by Jeremy Dibble and Robert Quinney, and a temporary exhibition on Parry featuring the manuscript of the *Songs of Farewell*.

[oxfordlieder.co.uk](http://oxfordlieder.co.uk)

# GRAMOPHONE

## RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Jeremy Nicholas is all smiles after listening to Crusell's three clarinet concertos, played and conducted by the irrepressible Michael Collins and the Swedish Chamber Orchestra



### Crusell

Clarinet Concertos - No 1, Op 1; No 2, Op 5; No 3, Op 11. Introduction, Theme and Variations on a Swedish Air, Op 12

Swedish Chamber Orchestra / Michael Collins *cl*  
Chandos ㉿ CHSA5187 (74' • DDD/DSD)

I imagine I am not alone in having first been introduced to the name and music of Bernhard Henrik Crusell by the 17-year-old Emma Johnson. When she played Crusell's F minor Concerto (No 2) for the final of the BBC Young Musician of the Year competition in 1984 it was a bold and unconventional choice that made many of us wonder why we had never heard such an attractive work before – and why it had been a teenager, rather than a high-profile seasoned pro, who had the imagination to revive it. Johnson, memorably, won the competition and subsequently recorded the concerto and its two companions presented here.

Crusell (1775-1838) ranks high in the history of Finnish music but not elsewhere – until, that is, the last decades of the 20th century. He was not given an entry in the first edition of *Grove* or indeed in most other music dictionaries until the 1980s. None of his works has ever received a performance at the BBC Proms. Things are changing. As a performer, Crusell became the first person to perform Mozart's divine Concerto following its publication in 1802, and also gave the first public performance of the *Kegelstatt* Trio. Chandos's first-rate booklet (Colin Lawson) reveals that 'more than 50 extant concert reviews [of Crusell] yield not a single negative comment'. As a composer for the clarinet, he is an almost exact contemporary of Weber and Spohr. His three concertos were composed between 1803 and 1812. Their



*'His faultless clarity and articulation, especially at some of the speeds he adopts, are things to marvel at'*



Bernhard Henrik Crusell ranks high in the history of Finnish music

themes, generally, may not be as memorable as Weber's, the orchestration no more than craftsmanlike, but are there any other clarinet concertos before the end of the 19th century which show off the virtuoso and lyrical qualities of the clarinet with more exuberance and grace? In the words of the great Jack Brymer, 'while there is nothing startlingly new in what he has to say, Crusell is always saying something worthy of our attention'.

All three works have been recorded several times since Johnson's captivating ASV discs (11/86, 11/89, 9/91), though this may well be the first time that the soloist in all three has also directed the orchestra. Collins is an experienced conductor in his own right but it takes an extraordinary degree of skill (and breath control!) to play such technically demanding solo parts while simultaneously leading the players.

However, I think he achieves better results than those with the benefit of two free hands and a baton. Even before he has blown a note, you will notice the exemplary balance between the different sections in the opening *tutti* of the E flat Concerto (No 1). It is a feature of this entire recording, quite apart from the precision and spirit throughout that he wins from his collaborators.

As to his role as soloist, I can only say that Collins's first entry made me smile – and kept it there for the entire length of the disc: the opening flourish is a rapid upward tonic arpeggio executed with such gleeful, impudent fluency that you simply want to applaud. It sets the tone for the next 74 minutes of (literally) breathtaking bravura notable not merely for Collins's sprightly athleticism but the amazing range of dynamics and colours he produces – and all without





Exemplary balance: Michael Collins takes on the dual role of soloist and conductor of the Swedish Chamber Orchestra

ever interfering with the long line and seemingly spontaneous phrasing. His faultless clarity and articulation, especially at some of the speeds he adopts, are things to marvel at.

If you are of a mind to dismiss all this as mere froth and bubble, turn to the slow movements. You will recall that Mozart thought the clarinet the closest of all instruments to the human voice, and Collins here turns his instrument into a silky-toned singer – and with a far more refined and liquid sonority than, say, the young Emma Johnson. His tempos, incidentally, are consistently livelier than hers as well, for example 5'22" as opposed to her 6'05" in the catchy rondo finale of the F minor Concerto, best known of the nine movements.

The disc concludes with a daredevil set of variations on a popular Swedish song (translated as 'Dear boy, empty the glass') by one Olof Ålström. 'It combines', writes Lawson, 'a certain wit with a level of virtuosity that makes severe technical demands on the soloist.' It is also great fun. If you're still hesitating, this should tip you over the edge.

Among other Crusell crusaders are Martin Fröst, Kari Kriikku and Karl Leister. They must all now yield to the newcomer, an altogether remarkable tour de force from the magnificent Michael Collins, another gold-standard Chandos recording to add to his earlier Weber, Stanford and Finzi concerto benchmarks for the label. **G**

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## Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue

# Orchestral



**Tim Ashley is impressed by Emmanuel Krivine's Debussy:**

*"Rondes de printemps" is done with exquisite dexterity, with all those tricky rhythmic shifts seamlessly negotiated'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 38**



**Jeremy Nicholas gets to grips with the music of Anton Urspruch:**

*'The piano concerto's finale offers the soloist the chance to let loose with lively treatments of its earworm principal subject'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 44**

## Adams

Violin Concerto

Leila Josefowicz *vn*

St Louis Symphony Orchestra / David Robertson

Nonesuch © 7559 79351-0 (33' • DDD)



In his memoir *Hallelujah Junction* (Faber: 2008; 2/09),

John Adams pays a glowing tribute to Leila Josefowicz's tireless advocacy of his Violin Concerto, praising the soloist's ability to bring out implicit rhythmic shadings and expressive possibilities in the music that even he had not imagined were there.

From the evidence provided on this new recording by Josefowicz, one can fully understand why. Adams's virtuoso concerto is difficult to pull off at the best of times, with more tricky corners to navigate than a Formula One racing track. A restless, edgy lyricism pervades the first movement, which imperceptibly gains momentum through Adams's trick of using a metric modulation grid à la Elliott Carter. The two forces don't truly lock into place until the final movement ("Toccata"), which alternates between fiery capriciousness and a dancelike swagger. In between, an eerie, dreamlike second still retains some of the restlessness of the opening movement but is held in check by a looping chaconne bass that shimmers underneath.

Comparing Josefowicz's new recording with her previous performance (the BBC Symphony Orchestra with Adams himself conducting) – which possessed plenty of grit and dynamism – seems somewhat unfair. That was back in 2002. The 2018 Josefowicz vintage certainly brings with it a depth and maturation that can only be achieved through 20 years of living and breathing a work now performed by the violinist more than 100 times. Throw into the mix David Robertson's bold interpretation with the excellent St Louis Symphony Orchestra and this recording sets a new benchmark.

Many of the finest performances of Adams's concerto bring something new to the work – heightened characterisation in Tamsin Waley-Cohen's excellent recording, again with the BBC SO, power and punch in Ilya Gringolts's take on the work with Julien Salemkour and the Copenhagen Philharmonic or nuanced shaping and integration of soloist and orchestra from Kristjan Järvi and the MDR Symphony Orchestra with Chad Hoopes. Josefowicz's mesmerising performance manages to blend all these elements while retaining her own imprint. Faultless.

### Pwyll ap Siôn

*Selected comparisons:*

*Josefowicz, BBC SO, Adams (7/02) (BBC) BBCLJ30012*

*Hoopes, MDR SO, K Järvi (6/14) (NAIV) V5368*

*Waley-Cohen, BBC SO, Litton (12/16) (SIGN) SIGCD468*

*Gringolts, Copenhagen PO, Salemkour*

*(7/17) (ORCH) ORC100066*

## Alfvén

'Complete Symphonies, Vol 1'

Symphony No 1, Op 7. Drapa, Op 27.

Midsommarvaka, Op 19

Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin /

Łukasz Borowicz

CPO © CPO555 043-2 (64' • DDD)



Hugo Alfvén regarded his Symphony No 1 (1896) as the first 'written in the

Swedish language'. As vague a concept as that is to grapple with, I would question it on the evidence of the first movement's characteristic two-note diving figure, which extends a tradition for similar descending two-note motifs reflective of spoken Swedish evident from symphonies by Berwald and others. Alfvén's work has a Nordic sense of raw fortitude, fatalism and hard labour but is otherwise pretty well behaved – establishment Stockholm to Kurt Atterberg's more real, muddy-booted Gothenburg, you could say.

The symphony is a decent listen. It gets a little tied up in the closing pages of its

otherwise clearly argued opening *Allegro*; the *Andante* is at its best when it breaks momentarily free from formal symphonic shackles; the Scherzo revels deliciously in that very formality and the finale is a true and impressive culmination that maintains momentum through varied shifts in scenery.

It's in the latter feature that we hear Alfvén's early promise as a painter, an experience that peers through the subtlest of his orchestrations and his quasi-visual exploration of timbre and harmony. Filling up here are two works that go the whole hog: proper musical landscapes from which narratives emerge and then recede again, including the *Midsommarvaka* ('Midsummer Vigil') so beloved of Swedes.

It is in these more plain-speaking pieces, rich and occasionally ferocious as captured here, that the DSO and Łukasz Borowicz prove how invaluable it is to have this music recorded by a distinguished central European orchestra, more for philosophical reasons than qualitative ones. There is a patrician quality added to the inbuilt alertness and drive of the symphony's outer movements in this performance that sets it apart from Neeme Järvi's finely articulated account with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic (which still stands very tall); but beyond that and the newcomer's slightly faster pace, there's not an awful lot between the two. Four more symphonies to come, though. **Andrew Mellor**

*Selected comparison:*

*Royal Stockholm PO, N Järvi (11/89) (BIS) BIS-CD395*

## Beethoven

Piano Concerto No 5, 'Emperor', Op 73<sup>a</sup>. Piano Sonata No 27, Op 90. Contredanses, Wo014.

Polonaise, Op 89. Praeludium, Wo055

Alessio Bax *pf*<sup>a</sup> Southbank Sinfonia / Simon Over

Signum © SIGCD525 (65' • DDD)



It is almost impossible not to like Alessio Bax. Since his Leeds Competition win





Majestic: Alessio Bax is joined by Southbank Sinfonia and Simon Over in Beethoven's Emperor Concerto

in 2000 he has confirmed his pianistic and musical qualities but also acquired the markings of a modern public figure: from posting recipes for classic Italian dishes on his music and travel blog (including a virtuoso tiramisu) to sharing a cute video of lullabies (also released as a CD) for his and his pianist wife's two-year-old daughter. At the same time, his discography has not shied away from bold choices. His Beethoven debut with the *Hammerklavier* Sonata (11/14), a *Gramophone* Editor's Choice that met with unanimous raves, is now followed up with the zenith of Viennese classic concertos.

Despite so many *Emperors* in the pantheon, there is still room for a new one, as Leif Ove Andsnes's much-lauded account has shown. Broadly speaking, where Andsnes brought out the power and profundity of understatement, Bax is more on the majestic side, yet without deviating into the occasional exaggeration of Brendel and Rattle. Keeping the architecture tight, Bax provides an immensely solid performance that is not afraid of spelling out the sound and fury, as, for instance, in the opening flourishes, where he rather underlines things compared to Gilels (at least four versions available on various labels), Andsnes and

even Brendel, who all favour less detailed, more sweeping waves.

Those who like the slow movement to go in one basic tempo may raise an eyebrow at the initial incongruity between the orchestral proposition and Bax's drastically slower response. This may well be intentional and soon a middle-ground accommodation is negotiated. Bax's playing is consummately lyrical. Even so, his expressive moulding and the very forward recording quality make for an overall result that is more immediate than transcendent. The finale sits ideally with his extrovert temperament and his life-affirming energy invites comparison with the best on disc. Fine though the South Bank Sinfonia are, they do not rival the Mahler Chamber Orchestra for personality and colour.

The fillers are a carefully chosen juxtaposition of late-ish and very early Beethoven, enabling Bax to reveal more searching qualities in his tone-colours and characterisation. All in all, this is an impressive disc, which repays repeated listening and can stand comparison with many of the biggest names. **Michelle Assay**

*Piano Concerto No 5 – selected comparisons:*

*Brendel, VPO, Rattle (5/99) (PHIL) 462 781-2PH3*

*Andsnes, Mahler CO (A/14) (SONY) 88843 05886-2*

## Beethoven

Symphonies – No 4, Op 60; No 5, Op 67

**Vienna Symphony Orchestra / Philippe Jordan**

Wiener Symphoniker © WS014 (66' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Goldener Saal, Musikverein, Vienna, March 8 & 9, 2017



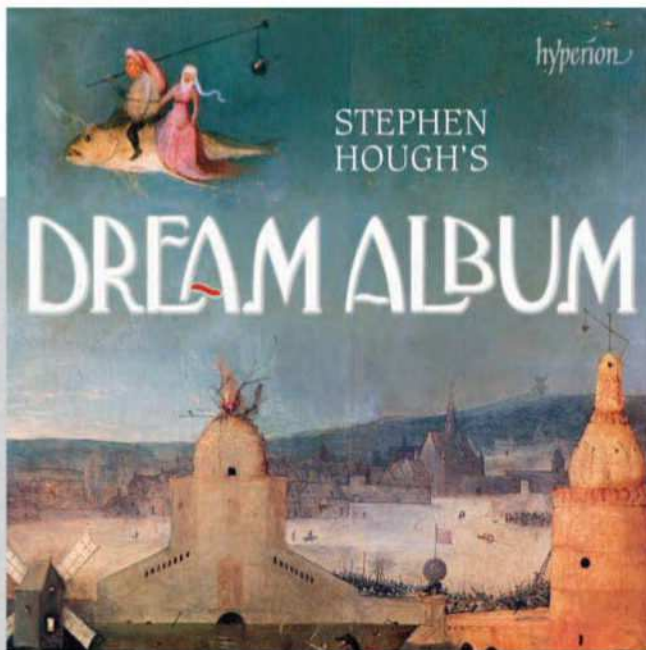
Beethoven wrote the Fourth Symphony to unblock problems he was encountering

with what we now know as the Fifth. Karajan thought it the most difficult of the nine to direct; others see the Fifth as being, by some distance, the more perilous. Whatever the perils, both are beautifully articulated by Philippe Jordan and the Vienna Symphony in this second instalment of an already distinguished Beethoven cycle whose point of arrival will be the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth in 2020.

Jordan's account of the Fourth is well-nigh ideal: lithe, lyrical, rhythmically intent. Tempos in the two outer movements are swift, one movement mirroring the other in a way that gives the symphony an agreeably through-composed feel. Nor is anything rushed or overdriven,



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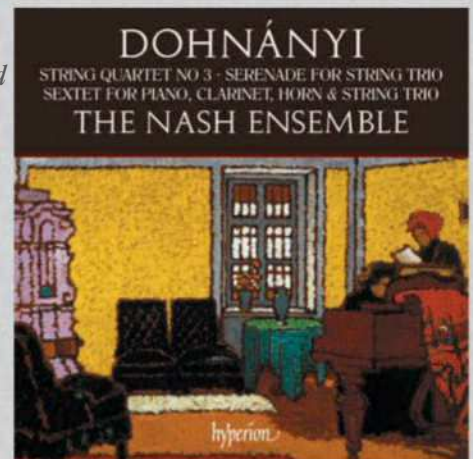
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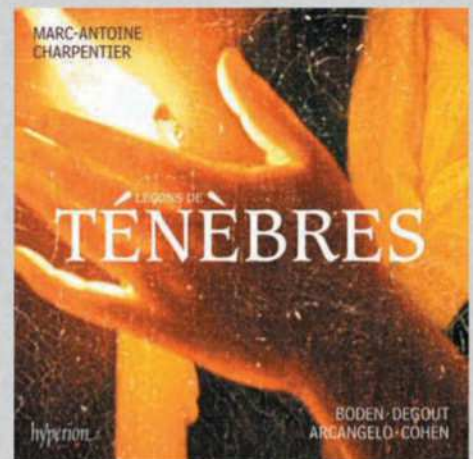
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Suk: Piano Music Jonathan Plowright (piano)  
Vivanco: Missa Assumptus Jesus & motets De Profundis, Robert Hollingworth (conductor)  
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MacMillan: String Quartets Royal String Quartet  
Strauss: Duet-Concertino; Beethoven: Trio; Glinka: Trio pathétique Laurence Perkins (bassoon)



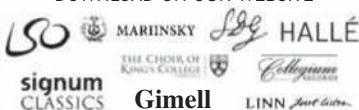
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so finely calibrated is the playing. It helps that the orchestral sound, nicely defined in this exemplary Musikverein recording, has a welcome transparency to it.

The performance of the Fifth Symphony is lean-bodied and swift in the modern style. One notices this in particular in the finale, where the march takes on something of the spirit of the Marseillaise. It's a view of the music that has become fashionable in recent years – the symphony as a manifestation of a specifically French revolution – though it's not one that was shared by an older generation of conductors (even the pacier ones) up to and including Carlos Kleiber in his celebrated 1974 Vienna recording (DG, 6/75). For them the symphony was a journey *per ardua ad astra* that moves with a steadier tread and weightier sonorities.

Jordan, however, has his own way of adding amplitude. As in his filmed cycle of the nine with the orchestra of the Paris Opéra (Arthaus Musik, 12/16), he includes the Fifth Symphony's third-movement repeat (bars 1-234) which Beethoven deleted due to an overlong inaugural concert. (A deletion he possibly came to regret.) It's a repeat that widens and rebalances the work's architectural footprint, without in any way distracting from the larger argument.

Whatever one's preferences as to text or pulse, rest assured that what Jordan and his superbly trained players give us is thought-through Beethoven of the highest order.

Richard Osborne

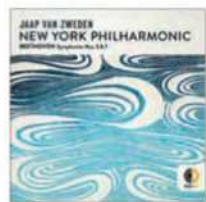
## Beethoven

Symphonies – No 5, Op 67<sup>a</sup>; No 7, Op 92<sup>b</sup>

New York Philharmonic Orchestra /  
Jaap van Zweden

Decca Gold © 481 6856 (71 • DDD)

Recorded live at David Geffen Hall, Lincoln Center, New York, <sup>a</sup>November 26-29, 2014; <sup>b</sup>October 29-31, 2015



The signs are that Jaap van Zweden will restore to the New York Philharmonic some of the bulk (muscle tone, maybe a pound or two of fat as well) shed during its previous diet of modernist and period-conscious classics under Alan Gilbert. His Beethoven is solidly built from the ground upwards, led by crisply distinct (but not divided) violins and strong on countermelodies such as the elated arc in cellos and basses to answer the horns' great call to arms in the finale of the Fifth (at 0'40").

Without any agogic indulgence, van Zweden brings an attractive lilt to the Fifth's *Andante con moto* from its first teasing up-beat. He also encourages the kind of currently unfashionable, keenly shaped legato that balances elements of dead-march and *cantabile* lament in the Seventh's *Allegretto*, and ties these performances back to a tradition inherited from émigré maestros such as Szell, Reiner and Steinberg.

Aside from some spot-miking – the bassoonist comes off well – the sound stage is set back to take in the NYPO sound at full tilt, including the glare of its upper strings which dimmed slightly during the Gilbert era. I like the surges of electricity in the finales of both symphonies, more judiciously built and paced than the sometimes frenetic accounts he led in 2011 with the Dallas SO, on which the new album is in every respect an improvement. There may be nothing here to equal the megawatt intensity of Bernstein's 1960s NYPO cycle but a quick, hawk-eyed intelligence (voicing the cut-and-thrust of the Seventh's Scherzo) and improvisatory melodic freedom (is that swing I hear in the Trio?) offer more than adequate compensation. **Peter Quantrill**

*Selected comparison – coupled as above:*

Dallas SO, van Zweden (DSO) DSOLIVE001

## Berlioz • Weber

Berlioz *Harold en Italie*, Op 16<sup>a</sup>. *La captive*, Op 12<sup>a</sup>. *Plaisir d'amour*<sup>a</sup> Weber *Andante* and *Rondo ungarese*<sup>a</sup>. *Aufforderung zum Tanz* (orch Berlioz)

<sup>a</sup>Lawrence Power *va*

Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra / Andrew Manze  
Hyperion © CDA68193 (71 • DDD)



What's the longest viola joke in the world? *Harold in Italy*. It didn't make

Niccolò Paganini laugh though. The virtuoso fiddler, having acquired a Stradivarius viola, tried to persuade Hector Berlioz to write something to show off the instrument. When he saw the sketches for the first movement were peppered with long rests, Paganini was disappointed. 'What you want is a viola concerto', sighed Berlioz, suggesting Paganini would be better writing one himself. After Paganini had gone off in a huff, Berlioz developed the work into a four-movement successor to his *Symphonie fantastique*, a symphony with a viola obbligato acting as

'melancholy dreamer in the manner of Byron's Childe-Harold'. It's difficult to see how viola players find it an attractive proposition – 40 minutes of music which can run out of steam, where the soloist gets little chance to shine – and yet, like Lawrence Power here, they queue up to record it. Indeed, Antoine Tamestit has set it down twice.

Power's mellow tone makes for a poetic reading as the Byronic brooder, his echo of the opening theme as delicate as gossamer. Andrew Manze leads Power and the Bergen Philharmonic on a swift hike across the Alps, keeping meandering to a minimum. The Pilgrims' March is brisk, the Bergen horn's tolling C naturals beautifully caught in Hyperion's recording. Power conjures a particularly glassy *sul ponticello* in his arpeggios here. The skirling tune opening the third movement evokes the strolling wind players Berlioz encountered in the Abruzzi mountains. Manze goes off like a rocket here, rather like Leonard Slatkin in Lyon, even if the Bergen woodwinds aren't quite as characterful. The Brigands' orgy is pretty tame as orgies go; Manze keeps things rhythmically taut and it's certainly more lively than Gergiev's trudge in Tamestit's second recording. It's the cleaner textures of Tamestit's earlier recording though – on period instruments with Les Musiciens du Louvre – which act as the work's most convincing advocate. Hyperion doesn't place the viola too far into the spotlight. Berlioz would have approved, even if Paganini wouldn't.

The disc is attractively padded out with a couple of mezzo-soprano songs arranged for viola by Manze, along with Weber's *Andante* and *Rondo ungarese*, usually known in its bassoon incarnation, its jaunty rondo good fun. It's followed by Berlioz's orchestration of *The Invitation to the Dance*, which arguably contains the best music on the disc.

**Mark Pullinger**

*Harold en Italie* – selected comparisons:

Tamestit, Musiciens du Louvre, Minkowski  
(2/12) (NAIV) V5266

Berthaud, Lyon Nat Orch, Slatkin  
(A/14) (NAXO) 8 573297

Tamestit, LSO, Gergiev (4/15) (LSO) LSO0760

## Bernstein

Candide – Overture. Fancy Free – Three Dance Variations. On the Town – Three Dance Episodes. On the Waterfront – Symphonic Suite. West Side Story – Symphonic Dances

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra /

Christian Lindberg

BIS © BIS2278 (63 • DDD/DSD)



A compendium of popular and streetwise Lenny for Bernstein 100 – and the virtuoso

trombonist in Christian Lindberg surely gives him a jazzier's headstart on just how this music should go. It certainly feels that way.

I do so like how the ubiquitous *Candide* Overture is possessed here of the tightness and drive of its pit-band origins (the antithesis of Bernstein's overblown DG account). There's that hint of breathlessness and the spectre of a rictus grin to spirit us across continents to witness the worst of this best of all possible worlds. All this ghastliness going on and we're all having such a lovely time.

The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic put on such a good show throughout this disc. The Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story* find them rounding corners that challenge the very best big bands; and while a touch more propulsion in the Prologue wouldn't have gone amiss, 'Mambo' fires up nicely in an explosion of percussion with its mariachi first trumpet delivering bullseyes, while the drum kit-driven 'Cool' again belies symphonic size to convey a scaled-down theatrical immediacy. The rarefied, transporting air of 'Somewhere' is Broadway writ large.

The all-dancing aspects of the disc do Bernstein's struttin' NYC style proud. *Fancy Free* came fully formed into this world and I never stop wondering at how the hawkish Bernstein/Broadway sound was immediately there in all its pulsing energy. The wry irony, the galloping rhythms, the angular syncopations had his distinctive stamp on them from the start.

And then *Fancy Free* became *On the Town* (the most underrated of groundbreaking Broadway musicals), its dance episodes cut from the same streetwise cloth – the gorgeous neon-lit 'Lonely town' or 'Times Square', with its sleazy saxes purveying a slightly tawdry but winning cool. Lindberg has the flavour of it.

The star turn, though, is Bernstein's only film score, *On the Waterfront*, encapsulated into a thrillingly atmospheric tone poem counterpointing the brutality of Elia Kazan's Oscar-winning movie with its yearning and triumphant vindication of the human spirit. Lindberg and the RLPO relish its cinematic scope (Bernstein underscored 42 of the movie's 108 minutes) from thunderous timpani-driven threat and altercation to the great love theme, which unforgettably keeps unfolding and

re-unfolding itself until it sweeps all before it.

The Apotheosis of the Suite and film is so typically one of those cathartic ever-hopeful Bernstein moments as Marlon Brando's Terry Malloy, beaten, bruised, down but not out, takes his long defiant walk back to work. Thrilling stuff, wonderfully captured by the BIS engineers. **Edward Seckerson**

## Bruckner

Symphony No 7

**SWR Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra / Kurt Sanderling**

SWR Classic © SWR19410CD (71' • DDD)  
Recorded live at the Liederhalle, Stuttgart,  
December 15-17, 1999

## Bruckner

Symphony No 9 (1894 original version)

**SWR Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra / Carlo Maria Giulini**

SWR Classic © SWR19411CD (62' • DDD)  
Recorded live at the Liederhalle, Stuttgart,  
September 20, 1996



Despite their interest in Bruckner's output being quite selective, both Kurt Sanderling and Carlo Maria Giulini made a number of very fine recordings of his music. Sanderling's 1999 live account of the Seventh Symphony, recorded when he was 87, seems to have divided critical opinion over the years but strikes me as being a quite magnificent performance. Although the CD booklet makes no mention of it, Sanderling uses the Nowak edition of the score until the climax of the *Adagio*, where he briefly reverts to the Haas edition by omitting the cymbal clash, timpani and triangle. This contrasts with his 1977 recording with the Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra (Unicorn, 7/79 – nla), in which he included the timpani.

At just over 25 minutes, Sanderling's interpretation of the *Adagio* is spacious but never seems unduly slow, the performance conveying both expressiveness and spirituality. The depth of tone of the violins is remarkable and the playing of the solo flute in the coda is as poignant as any performance I've ever heard. In the first movement, the music's contrasting episodes of serenity, rusticity and splendour are superbly realised, and both the Scherzo and finale brim with energy. In the latter movement, Sanderling observes the various

*ritard* markings found in the Nowak edition but does so in a way that sounds entirely natural. The final *fff* chord just before the coda has terrific impact and from there it's a straight run to the end, Sanderling eschewing the unmarked slowing that many conductors adopt at this point. There are one or two minor slips of ensemble but for the most part the playing is excellent.

Giulini's 1996 recording of the Ninth Symphony is not quite in the same league as his uniquely persuasive version with the Vienna Philharmonic, as Richard Osborne observed in his original review (Hänssler Classic, 11/06), but it's nevertheless a powerful and moving document, and superior to his first version with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. The video recording of Giulini rehearsing and conducting the Ninth Symphony with the same orchestra (Arthaus, 6/05) derives from the same sessions and is also very recommendable.

Both symphonies enjoy superb recordings. Some faint background noise is occasionally apparent but it's only the applause at the end that reminds one these are live performances. **Christian Hoskins**

*Symphony No 9 – selected comparisons:*

Chicago SO, Giulini (12/77) (EMI/WARN) 431752-2

VPO, Giulini, (8/89) (DG) 427 345-2GH

## Czerny

Piano Concerto No 1. Introduction, Variations and Rondo on Weber's Hunting Chorus from 'Euryanthe', Op 60. Introduzione e Rondo brillant, Op 233

**Rosemary Tuck** *pf*

**English Chamber Orchestra / Richard Bonyngne**  
Naxos © 8 573688 (80' • DDD)



The third release in Naxos's survey of Carl Czerny's works for piano and orchestra

offers two recorded premieres, both dating from the industrious musician's relatively early years. It would be easy to disparage the three-movement D minor Concerto from 1811-12 as Czerny imitating his teacher Beethoven (the Violin Concerto and the Third Piano Concerto often come to mind), notably in the long first movement's prominent timpani and darkly declamatory passages, although the major-key theme's woodwind-writing oddly foreshadows Brahms. The flashy and adroit solo part tends to ramble, despite its seductive surface elegance. By contrast, the relatively brief second movement features intriguing interplay between the piano and horns, and its exuberant peroration leads





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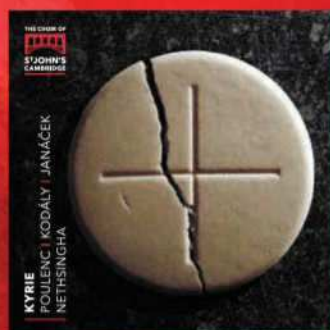


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Gramophone, July/December 2016

BBC Music Magazine  
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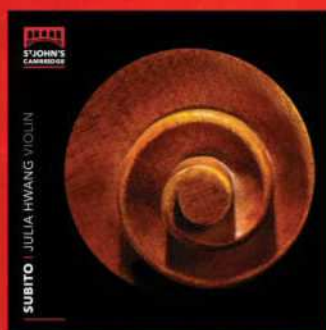
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*Choir & Organ*, November 2017

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directly into a bracing finale where the horns lead the hunt, so to speak. Granted, some of Czerny's ideas bog down and never quite develop or take wing; but one should cut the budding 20-year-old composer some slack.

The other disc debut turns out to be an equally 'horny' work. Although the Hunting Chorus from Weber's *Euryanthe* purports to be the centrepiece of this *Introduction, Variations and Rondo*, poor Czerny just can't get Beethoven's *Emperor* Concerto out of his system, as the declamatory gestures and runs in double notes blatantly bear out. Rosemary Tuck's technical poise and genuine feeling for the idiom make a compelling case for these flawed but interesting works, while the balance between the soloist and the English Chamber Orchestra under Richard Bonyngé's solidly supportive leadership replicates the perspective one might perceive in a modest-size concert hall.

Although we don't know exactly when Czerny wrote his *Introduzione e Rondo brillante*, the piano-writing finally breaks free of Beethoven, imbibing in Weber-like glitter with some healthy Chopinesque seasoning. Here, however, Tuck's even-keeled pianism faces competition from Howard Shelley's more incisive and characterful Hyperion traversal, which also benefits from superior engineering and orchestral playing. Still, this disc's two previously unrecorded compositions are worth investigating. **Jed Distler**

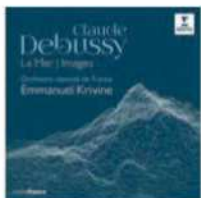
*Introduzione e Rondo brillante* – selected comparison:  
Shelley, *Tasmanian SO* (5/17) (HYPE) CDA68138

## Debussy

La mer. Images

French National Orchestra / Emmanuel Krivine

Erato © 9029 56870-4 (61' • DDD)



Emmanuel Krivine's new *La mer* with the Orchestre National de France focuses on the

much-discussed question of Debussy's decision, on revising the score in 1909, to delete from the 1905 original a series of brass fanfares in the closing pages (eight bars before fig 60) of the final 'Dialogue du vent et de la mer'. Given Debussy's compositional fastidiousness, one might have thought the revision should be considered definitive, though numerous conductors have deemed the change to be mistaken and reinstated the brass, with the result that it is now a matter of interpretative choice as to whether to include the fanfares or not.

Krivine allows us to make up our own minds by giving us both endings, using the 1909 score for his complete performance and adding the last two minutes or so of the 1905 version as an appendix. In the latter, he emphasises the difference by letting the fanfares glare a bit, where some interpreters rein the brass in. The equivalent passage in 1909 can sometimes hang fire, though Krivine has generated such tremendous tension by this point that you don't notice any weakening of impact. Whatever the merits of this, there is, I think, a flaw in that the disc's organisation doesn't allow us to hear 'Dialogue' in its entirety in both versions: a tracking system allowing us to programme a choice of alternatives, as with Iván Fischer's recording of Liszt's *Faust Symphony* (Philips, 4/98), would have been preferable.

That said, this is an excellent performance, tautly focused, as is Krivine's way, yet propulsive and flowing in its sense of the music's organic evolution and internal logic. There's real mystery at the start and genuine grandeur when we reach the first movement's noontide climax. An underlying awareness of the sea's potential danger lurks beneath moments of calm throughout, and ripples of unease intrude on the opening of 'Jeux de vagues' before the music gathers momentum. 'Dialogue' really is *animé et tumultueux*, fierce in its climaxes, very stormy and intense.

Similar qualities inform the performance of *Images* which forms its companion piece. Aware, one suspects, that Debussy struck the word 'tristes' from the original title, Krivine's 'Gigues' is not as overtly melancholic as some. 'Rondes de printemps', meanwhile, is done with exquisite dexterity, with all those tricky rhythmic shifts seamlessly negotiated, the textures beautifully lucid. 'Ibéria' has plenty of energy in its outer movements and a real swagger when we get to the pizzicato guitar imitations in 'Le matin d'un jour de fête'. Krivine keeps a tight rein on the habanera rhythm in 'Les parfums de la nuit', which exudes sensual restraint. In both works the playing is at once pristine and virtuoso, while the sound, whether on disc or download, is almost blindingly clear. It's a fine achievement. **Tim Ashley**

## Mahler

Symphony No 1

Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra / Riccardo Chailly

Accentus © DVD ACC20335; © ACC10335  
(62' + 24' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • O • s)

Recorded live, January 2015

Includes interview with Riccardo Chailly



At least on record, the Leipzig Gewandhaus does not have much of a Mahler tradition – Masur and Neumann

briskly dispatching this and that – but the First Symphony was completed in the city, as Riccardo Chailly reminds us in an illuminating interview.

However, as Rob Cowan cautioned when reviewing the Ninth in this now almost-complete cycle, save the bonus until you've seen the performance, which is full of its own insights. There's an irresistible clarity to Chailly's illumination of Mahler's symphonic antecedents: the deformation of Beethoven's Ninth in the opening bars, as well as their more direct debt to the moment of sudden mystery in the middle of the finale to Brahms's Second. The second-movement *Ländler* has a gruff, never coarsened impetus – 'Un bal' glimpsed through the dirty windows of the Bohemian tavern owned by Mahler's violent father Bernhard – and if Berlioz is father to the First, Beethoven's *Pastoral* is granddaddy to all Mahler's infusions of symphonic form with life stories.

Underplaying the lazy drawl of the funeral march's first klezmer episode, Chailly achieves a magical transition into the movement's central, celestially imagined *Volkswiese* (31'40") – a premonition of the Fourth's heavenly pastures – so that the bitter parody of the returning klezmer band cuts to the quick. At such points, the Leipzigers' Iron Curtain heritage of Weill and Dessau comes into its own.

Back to that interview: Chailly insists that, for him, the symphony's final, downward-octave thrust brings no victory but only the brutal close to a chapter which proceeds directly to the trauma of the Second's opening rites. Revisionist? That's up to you; but the D major coda is played for all its worth, with standing horns joined (just as Mahler requests) by trumpet and trombone reinforcements. Multi-miked sound matches picture, taking you right inside Mahler's orchestration at its most outlandish (and, indeed, Berliozian). Chailly's Concertgebouw recording (1/97) was a high point of his Decca cycle but he's one of those musicians who not only know that there is always more to say but who challenge themselves to communicate it.

**Peter Quantrill**





Irresistible clarity: Riccardo Chailly conducts the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in Mahler's First Symphony

## Mahler

### Symphony No 4<sup>a</sup>

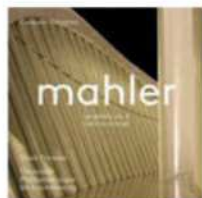
Piano Quartet (orch C Matthews)

<sup>a</sup>Miah Persson sop Luxembourg Philharmonic

Orchestra / Gustavo Gimeno

Pentatone  PTC5186 651

(67' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



Setting this new studio recording of Mahler's teenage piano quartet movement, as

elaborated by Colin Matthews, against a more congested live account on the Concertgebouw's label, it's clear that the Luxembourg Philharmonic (especially its supple, fine-spun string section) yields little to ensembles with a more distinguished history of Mahler performance except in the matter of weight, which isn't such an issue with the most Classically scored chapter of the composer's symphonic *roman-à-clef*.

What emerges from Matthews's orchestral tapestry (contra the booklet note writer) is no abortive Brahmsian essay but the blueprint of a Mahlerian voice well on the way to its first fully distinctive utterance in *Das klagende Lied*. The quartet texture is now laced with anticipations (or is it recollections?) of the early symphonies

and the second-act Dream-Pantomime of *Hansel and Gretel*, which would be one of Mahler's early successes as music director of the Hamburg Opera.

As a former assistant to Claudio Abbado and Bernard Haitink, Gustavo Gimeno has learnt his Mahler at the feet of the two pre-eminent Mahler conductors of their generation. He teases out every thematic correspondence of the Fourth's first movement, as a cousin to the Rondo-Burleske of the Ninth for its economy of thought and motivic ingenuity. The inner movements flow with understated charm, coming as quite a relief after recent, more fretful and blatant interpretations by Marc Albrecht and Valery Gergiev respectively.

The soprano of Miah Persson has gained a little weight and vibrancy since recording the symphony's finale with Iván Fischer almost a decade ago but she now makes even more of the words than before. However, it isn't Abbado or Fischer who offer the most pertinent historical comparisons but Bruno Walter back in 1949, for a fresh and precipitate relish of Mahler's orchestral word-painting, while Persson falls more gratefully on the ear than the querulous Desi Halban. She and Gimeno between them convey a wide-eyed, prelapsarian freshness that goes to the heart of the piece. **Peter Quantrill**

*Piano Quartet – selected comparison:*

RCO, Zagrosek (RCO) RCO11001

*Symphony No 4 – selected comparisons:*

Halban, New York PO, Walter

(9/46<sup>th</sup>) (SONY) 88691 92010-2


Persson, Budapest Fest Orch, I Fischer

(4/09) (CHNN) CCSSA26109

## Mahler

### Symphony No 6

Minnesota Orchestra / Osmo Vänskä

BIS  BIS2266 (87' • DDD/DSD)



The distinction between objectivity and subjectivity is crucial in Mahler

and it doesn't take long to establish that Vänskä's bias is emphatically towards the former. The opening *Allegro energico ma non troppo* is very *non troppo* indeed – a deliberate tread which might have something in common with the likes of Klaus Tennstedt were the colour (darker) and trenchancy (weightier) more in keeping with the 'Tragic' spirit of this, the grimmest of Mahler's symphonies. And that's where the subjectivity comes in. This music has to sound and feel personal and Vänskä is simply too removed from the





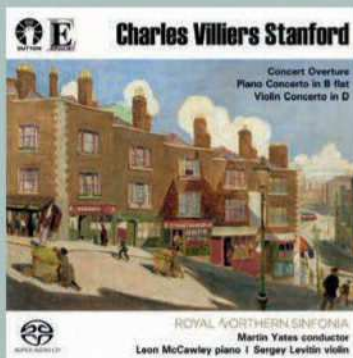
# DUTTON EPOCH NEW RELEASE



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**W.S. GILBERT & A. CELLIER**

**The Mountebanks** This is a revival of a charming light opera – the “G&S” opera that Sullivan didn’t write. W.S. Gilbert’s partner in the enterprise was Alfred Cellier, music director of London’s Opera Comique, where he was experienced in conducting the nightly performances of Gilbert & Sullivan’s most successful operas. However, Cellier died on 28 December 1891, before he had finished scoring *The Mountebanks*. Ivan Caryll, music director of the Lyric Theatre, completed the work, which was first seen in January 1892, and would run for 229 performances with a provincial tour. This sumptuous recording demonstrates that this late Gilbert opera with a different collaborator is a masterpiece in its own right. Cellier’s *Suite Symphonique* (1878) is also included, the fourth movement of which would later become the overture for *The Mountebanks*. **WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS**



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**CHARLES VILLIERS STANFORD**

**Concert Overture, Piano & Violin Concertos** A series of recording sessions in Hall One of the Sage Gateshead, with the Royal Northern Sinfonia conducted by Martin Yates plus soloists Leon McCawley (piano) and Sergey Levitin (violin), yielded this superb disc of early works by Irish composer Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924). The Piano Concerto is an engaging work, with both poise and a flowing solo line – brilliantly performed here by Leon McCawley – but the Violin Concerto is the more ambitious canvas, and demonstrates how quickly the young Stanford was maturing. He had intended it for a virtuoso of his time, Italian violinist Guido Papini, but in the event it was never played. In this recording, Sergey Levitin’s expressive and authoritative performance helps bring the music vividly to life. **WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS**



CDLX 7352

**INA BOYLE**

**Sea Poem, Symphony No. 1 etc.** This programme of music by Irish composer Ina Boyle (1889-1967), a one-time student of Vaughan Williams, collates several of her major orchestral works. The rhapsodic Violin Concerto of 1935 is in three continuous movements, and both conductor Ronald Corp and soloist Benjamin Baker interpret the music with sympathetic attention to detail, maintaining its natural ebb and flow. Boyle wrote three symphonies, and this disc presents the long overdue recording of the First Symphony, subtitled *Glencree (In the Wicklow Hills)*, which dates from 1924-27. The young cellist Nadège Rochat gives a powerful reading of the *Psalm* for cello and orchestra, written in 1927, while four short but captivating orchestral pieces complete the programme – which reveals Ina Boyle as a composer of originality and invention. **WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS**



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**Short Orchestral Works** Conductor David Lloyd-Jones and the BBC Concert Orchestra explore Elgar’s short orchestral works, which range, in chronological order, from Elgar’s first to last orchestral works. All of them are played in Lloyd-Jones’s newly published authentic editions – part of Volume 23 of the *Elgar Complete Edition* – and are characterised by their winning melodic allure and assured craftsmanship. They could be considered as representing the very essence of Elgar: some are tender and poetical, almost introverted, while some display an infectious, outgoing charm, and a few exhibit that extrovert boisterousness that rose to the surface so readily when he felt that the common touch was required. **INCLUDES WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS**

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overwhelming sense that Mahler's very life was wholly dependent upon this music. The performance lacks empathy.

Even the rapturous second subject – the so-called 'Alma' theme – lacks what one might call spiritual uplift, its thrilling reprise with vaulting horn descant sounding bright and businesslike but little more. Hardly an utterance of the heart. In short, for all the clarity and brilliance, where is the drama, the atmosphere? The departure to higher plains at the still centre of this first movement (with cowbells) should feel not just remote but otherworldly, a momentary out-of-body experience far removed from the relentless march to the abyss. And even Mahler's moments of thunderous rhetoric short-change us: that mighty appoggiatura in the coda, a moment of crushing dissonance, is swept past with scant regard for the huge ritardando which lends it weight.

Vänskä opts for the *Andante* second – which is a no-no in my book, regardless of all the received wisdom. The distorted mirror image of first movement and Scherzo (the original ordering) is an inspired (and harrowing) juxtaposition which no one will ever persuade me wasn't Mahler's preferred option. What's more, Vänskä's coolness sounds and feels like too much of a respite from Mahler's travails. And even the Scherzo, when it finally arrives, is too forensic and under-characterised for my taste. One totally gets the notes but not the reasons for them.

Then compare Bernstein (DG) or Tennstedt (his hair-raising live Proms performance) in the cosmic opening paragraph of the finale. There's a dimension missing beyond Mahler's orchestral wizardry. And as this tremendous movement forges on, hammer blow after hammer blow, I don't feel the emotional heat of it, the strenuous and exhausting human endeavour of it – rather I hear a brilliant exposition of the notes from Vänskä's Minnesota Orchestra. Sorry, but this is not Vänskä's music. Tennstedt and Bernstein by contrast leave us completely and utterly spent.

**Edward Seckerson**

*Selected comparisons:*

VPO, Bernstein (1/90) (DG) 427 697-2GH2,

459 080-2GX16, 477 5181GB5 or 477 8668GB11

LPO, Tennstedt (8/09) (LPO) LPO0038

## Mozart

Piano Concerto No 21, K467<sup>a</sup>. Piano Sonata No 10, K330. Fantasy, K475. Variations on 'Lison dormait', K264

**Yeol Eum Son** <sup>pf</sup><sup>a</sup>Academy of St Martin in the Fields / Sir Neville Marriner  
Onyx © ONYX4186 (75' • DDD)



The South Korean pianist Yeol Eum Son (b1986) is already

something of a veteran, having performed with the New York Philharmonic and Lorin Maazel all of 14 years ago. She also recorded a disc of Chopin's Études at the same time, although it seems not to have achieved international release.

Thus this collection of works by Mozart in C (major and minor) becomes her calling card, as well as being the last recording of Sir Neville Marriner. The first impression is a reminder of what a stylish Mozartian the late conductor was, his Academy musicians rolling out a plush carpet for Son's entrance in the ubiquitous K467. Son is clearly her own woman, however, with a broad dynamic palette and a keen awareness of style; the documentation doesn't identify the composer of the lead-ins and cadenza so one presumes they are by Son herself. She takes care not to grandstand, blending well with the orchestra in a closely recorded acoustic. Tempos are apposite if a fraction of a notch down from the current fashion in the outer movements; the central *Andante* is romantic in the best sense, without cloying.

Son's wide dynamic range pays dividends too in the solo works: a sonata, a variation set and the C minor Fantasy. Everything is minutely thought-out; and that might appear to be the only caveat on this beautifully considered and immaculately played disc. Son's care for contrast and continuity can come to seem too well planned, robbing the music of the last ounce of spontaneity that is such a major part of the success of recordings by the likes of Pires or Anderszewski (the list could go on). Surely that will come in time; nevertheless, this is an uncommonly fine Mozartian debut.

**David Thresher**

*Piano Concerto No 21 – selected comparisons:*

Pires, COE, Abbado (2/96) (DG) 439 941-2GH

Anderszewski, Sinf Varsovia

(4/02) (VIRG/ERAT) 545504-2

## Palumbo

Concerto Barocco<sup>a</sup>. Cello Concerto<sup>b</sup>. Recorder Concerto<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Dan Laurin <sup>rec</sup><sup>b</sup>Mats Olofsson <sup>vc</sup><sup>a</sup>Anna Paradiso  
<sup>hpd</sup> Gävle Symphony Orchestra / Jaime Martín  
BIS © BIS2255 (83' • DDD/DSD)



If you want to read a glowing review of at least one work on this disc, you can do so in

the form of the composer's own booklet note. Vito Palumbo signs off with the conclusion that his Recorder Concerto is a piece in which 'a very deep meaning [is] hidden in very note' and which 'reveals the devastating hideousness of our time'.

I wonder how Bach and Shostakovich would react to that summation of the early 2000s, given one saw countless family members die of everyday disease and the other lived under a dictatorship. Respectively, those figures exercise a significant influence over Palumbo's concertos for harpsichord, *Concerto Barocco* (2006), and cello (2007). The former 're-appropriates' harmonic, melodic and rhythmic tools used by Bach and Vivaldi. It's a tight, idiosyncratic pastiche with one eyebrow raised. Palumbo's Baroque in-jokes don't disrupt the fun and motoric momentum but it sounds like that same momentum has him by the goolies.

The Cello Concerto is another inward-looking experiment, this based on using 'only tonal or modal material' (not quite such a challenge, surely). In the syrupy slow movement, Hollywood-style button-pushing lets the cat out of the bag and it's not long before you start to notice the same formulaic, borrowed gestures in the spiky, Shostakovich-inspired outer movements too. As in *Concerto Barocco*, harmonic sequencing gets Palumbo out of cul-de-sacs a little too often; when a pregnant textural counterpoint emerges at 4'30" in the finale it lasts all of nine seconds.

While I can't decipher the 'hidden meaning in every note' the composer describes, I do feel the Recorder Concerto is the most interesting piece here even if it drifts into inane avian tweeting too often (name me a contemporary recorder concerto that doesn't). There is some meat here for Jaime Martín's Gävle Symphony Orchestra and the locked-in discourse that emerges in the eighth minute (there are three movements on a single track) is just what we were lacking in the Cello Concerto. That is one example of musical material proving as strong and/or interesting as the textures in which it has been clothed, and not having been cherry-picked from music history. There is another at the very end of the slow movement. As both a critic and a general listener, I wish there were more.

**Andrew Mellor**

## Rachmaninov

Symphony No 2, Op 27

Philharmonia Orchestra /

Vladimir Ashkenazy

Signum Ⓢ SIGCD530 (59' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall, London, November 5, 2015



Vladimir Ashkenazy has always conducted Rachmaninov's most extended symphony

with conviction, making it feel not one bar too long. Indeed, with the possible exceptions of André Previn and Mariss Jansons, it is difficult to think of a contemporary exponent more completely at home in it. This authoritative, concert-sourced rendering from November 2015 brings their respective tally to three recordings apiece. The differences? Both Previn and Ashkenazy restore the cut that Jansons continues to inflict on the finale while rejecting the modern embrace of the first-movement exposition repeat and the older impulse to terminate that movement with a bogus percussive thwack. Neither favours extremes of tempo although Ashkenazy is closer to Jansons in combining red-bloodedness with agility.

It is the peripherals which have changed most since Ashkenazy made his famous Concertgebouw recording for Decca. Signum's version was captured in London's Royal Festival Hall, which means that the sound is somewhat dusty and opaque, belying the advances in digital technology since 1981. Remarkably the producer, then as now, is Andrew Cornall; and given that Ashkenazy and the Philharmonia took the Second Symphony to several acoustically superior UK halls, I sense a missed opportunity.

On to the booklet, where the designer's choice of sky-blue backgrounds of varying intensity makes the text difficult to read as well as lending the physical product a curiously unsophisticated look. There's no doubting the bond between conductor, orchestra and audience – the applause at the end is vociferous – but whether non-attendees will want to supplement Ashkenazy's studio classic with this newcomer is a moot point.

David Gutman

*Selected comparisons:*

LSO, Previn (4/73<sup>8</sup>) (EMI) 085289-2

RCO, Ashkenazy (7/96) (DECC)

448 116-2DF2 or 455 798-2LC3

Sydney SO, Ashkenazy (4/09) (EXTO) EXCL00018

RCO, Jansons (8/16) (RCO) RCO16004

## Ruders

Viola Concerto<sup>a</sup>. Handel Variations<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Lars Anders Tomter vs <sup>b</sup>Aarhus Symphony

Orchestra / <sup>a</sup>Andreas Delfs, <sup>a</sup>Marc Soustrot

Dacapo Ⓢ 8 226149 (66' • DDD)



Poul Ruders's Viola Concerto was written in 1993-94, between his First Cello

Concerto, *Anima*, and First Piano Concerto, but is given here in its thoroughgoing 2013 revision. Cast in three movements which play continuously, the overall design resembles an arch within an arch, with the lyrical central *Largo sonore* – at the heart of which lies a cadenza – framed by two extended *Risolto appassionato* spans, the second of which in turn encloses a second cadenza before closing with a calm *Intimo quasi penoso* coda. The viola line, with its edgy lyricism intensified by Ruders's reworking, is wonderfully realised here by Lars Anders Tomter, who excelled in Holmboe's Concerto five years back (7/13); but then Tomter is a hugely experienced, fully rounded player with a discography extending back at least to the 1980s. But this is a concerto with orchestra, and the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra, expertly directed by Marc Soustrot, relish the warmth of Ruders's at times late-Bergian orchestration.

With Andreas Delfs on the podium, the orchestra also have fun with the *Handel Variations* (2009), '90 symphonic reflections on eight bars by Georg Friedrich Handel'. The eight bars are the opening passage of the Bourrée from the *Water Music*, which spawn a near-40-minute, kaleidoscopically inventive orchestral concerto, an enthralling journey through the full gamut of musical landscapes with more sharply delineated light and shade than in the Viola Concerto. *Handel Variations* plays fast and loose with many styles, from Stravinskian neoclassicism to Petterssonian intensity to New Simplicity along the way. The music is always Ruders's own, with a strong element of parody throughout, although the work's conclusion is subdued, almost melancholic. Dacapo's sound is vivid with terrific depth. A winner. **Guy Rickards**

## Saint-Saëns

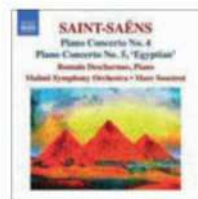
Piano Concertos – No 4, Op 44;

No 5, 'Egyptian', Op 103

Romain Descharmes pf

Malmö Symphony Orchestra / Marc Soustrot

Naxos Ⓢ 8 573478 (55' • DDD)



Saint-Saëns's five piano concertos are well catered for on disc. Every home

should have at least one complete set of these life-enhancing works. For what it's worth, my personal favourites are by Stephen Hough and Jeanne-Marie Darré (who had the benefit of studying all five with the composer himself; EMI, 7/97 – nla). There are, however, comparatively few discs pairing Concertos Nos 4 and 5, arguably the two best (the usual industry coupling is Nos 2 and 4). In fact, there are only two other examples currently available: Aldo Ciccolini on a terrific DVD (he also adds the Ravel G major) and Pascal Rogé (who finds room for Saint-Saëns's Second Concerto as well).

All four of these are fine; but should you want just these two concertos, despite the relatively short playing time (55'21") I have no hesitation in warmly commending the newcomer, Vol 3 of all Saint-Saëns's works for piano and orchestra recorded by these forces. There is real bulk to the orchestral sound, while Sean Lewis, producer, engineer and editor, has placed the piano (slightly too?) forward, allowing us to hear every detail of the virtuoso keyboard-writing, only occasionally compromising the dominance of the principal material. To my ears, it sounds like a two-microphone placement (like the old Mercury recordings), with no resorting to artificial highlighting of, for instance, woodwind solos.

It is true that Romain Descharmes and his genial conductor take a more relaxed view of *allegro* (be it *allegro moderato/vivace/animato* or *molto*) than either Hough or Darré. The first movements of their C minor Concerto (No 4), for example, last 11'16" and 11'23" respectively, while Descharmes clocks in at 12'27". All three agree, however, on the beautiful slow movement of the so-called *Egyptian* Concerto (around the 11'00" mark) and here the Naxos recording comes into its own, with disarmingly lovely playing from the soloist and his Malmö colleagues. This excellent release is completed by Dominic Wells's first-rate booklet which, for those coming fresh to the music, usefully identifies the principal themes with accurate time codes. **Jeremy Nicholas**

*Selected comparisons – coupled as above:*

Rogé, RPO, Philb Orch, Dutoit (10/81<sup>8</sup>) (DECC) 478 3196

Hough, CBSO, Oramo (11/01) (HYPER) CDA67331/2

Ciccolini, RAI SO, Turin, Ros-Marba, Kondrashin

(VAI) DVD DVDVA14352



## Schumann • Brahms

**Brahms Variations and Fugue**

on a Theme by Handel, Op 24<sup>a</sup>

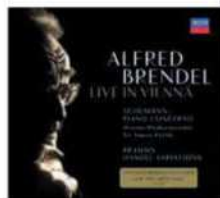
**Schumann Piano Concerto, Op 54<sup>b</sup>**

**Alfred Brendel** *pf*

<sup>b</sup>Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra / Sir Simon Rattle

Decca © 483 3288 (59' • DDD)

Recorded live at the <sup>a</sup>Konzerthaus, Vienna, June 4, 1979; <sup>b</sup>Musikverein, Vienna, March 11, 2001



'Next to ... Liszt's Variations on Bach's "Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen" ...

I found the neoclassicist/neo-baroque corset worn by Brahms somewhat irritating.' So writes Brendel in his mischievous and engaging note, which is why he has never made a commercial recording of Brahms's *Handel Variations*, unlike the Schumann Concerto, which he has recorded several times in the distinguished company of Haitink, Abbado and Sanderling.

So do we need another account of the Schumann from Brendel? Yes, when it's this fine – caught on the wing in the company of the VPO and Rattle in 2001. The orchestral playing is predictably superb, from the solo oboe onwards, with the strings finding myriad colours and shadings. Rattle and Brendel mould a reading that ebbs and flows with complete naturalness. There's no place for extremes of tempo here; instead, Brendel lets the score be his guide, and the moments where he becomes accompanist are wonderfully subtle. There are odd noises off – at 3'14" in the first movement it sounds as if someone is jangling a pocketful of change – but the distraction is momentary. The aptly flowing second movement possesses a clear-sighted beauty that makes up for the fact that Brendel is not at heart a colourist, and the give and take between soloist and orchestra is utterly genial. The finale treads a middle ground – not as frantic as some readings but with a real one-in-a-bar feel that makes it fizzingly alive, Brendel relishing the moments of contrasting delicacy to fine effect. The enthusiastic applause is quickly faded.

The Brahms is also from Vienna, this time 1979. Brendel may have been playfully dismissive of the piece but there's no sense of halfheartedness about this performance. It's a work that can sound somewhat strenuous and relentless in the wrong hands – though pianists as different as Perahia and Plowright have shown us what an ebullient piece it can

be too. With Brendel there's no lack of humour, from the first variation onwards, and Brahms's more chewy writing doesn't present a technical obstacle (the *risoluto* octave-writing of Var 4 never becomes vulgar, while Var 23's bass-centric writing avoids sounding overly heavy). The way the emotional temperature increases through Var 24's swirling impetuosity to Var 25's triumphant peroration is unerringly done and the performance is crowned by a mighty account of the closing fugue. This is without question an essential addition to the Brendel discography.

**Harriet Smith**

*Brahms – selected comparisons:*

*Perahia (2/11) (SONY) 88697 72725-2*

*Plowright (2/13) (BIS) BIS2047*

## Schumann

**Cello Concerto, Op 129<sup>a</sup>. Adagio and Allegro, Op 70<sup>b</sup>. Fantasiestücke, Op 73<sup>b</sup>. Drei Romanzen, Op 94 (arr Schwabe)<sup>b</sup>. Fünf Stücke im Volkston, Op 102<sup>b</sup>. 'FAE' Sonata – Intermezzo (arr Schwabe)<sup>b</sup>**

**Gabriel Schwabe** *vc* <sup>b</sup>Nicholas Rimmer *pf*

<sup>a</sup>Royal Northern Sinfonia / Lars Vogt

Naxos © 8 573630 (70' • DDD)



The Swiss-German cellist Gabriel Schwabe offers what the booklet

describes as Schumann's 'Complete Works for Cello'. In fact, all that and more, as two works are arrangements; and some of his loveliest music is here. Schumann himself had turned briefly to playing the cello when his dreams of a career as a pianist were punctured, and he understood the instrument as well as he understood the piano – and, it would appear, far better than he grasped the abilities of the violin.

Schwabe majors on the lyrical character of the Concerto, a work that invites the solo instrument to sing and dance as much as would Saint-Saëns's A minor Concerto of 22 years later. In fact, Schwabe's performance demonstrates more than many the kinship between the two works (and, of course, this cellist has recently made a disc of the later work which was much admired by Jeremy Nicholas – 1/18). The chamber dimensions of Lars Vogt's Northern Sinfonia enable the cello to participate on a more level playing field than larger forces would allow, rather as the period instruments of the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra similarly empowered Jean-

Guihen Queyras – although the effect is of course very different. The two approaches complement one another and Schwabe's concerto is just as persuasive on its own terms as Queyras's.

The instrument Schwabe plays was made in Brescia in around 1600 – it's inexplicably omitted from the cover photo – and its tone is ideally suited to the gentle *Romanzen* just as it is to the more playful *Stücke im Volkston*, and even works that fall in between, such as Schwabe's arrangement of the Intermezzo from the collaborative *FAE* Sonata. A useful survey in near-ideal performances, finely recorded. **David Thresher**

*Cello Concerto – selected comparison:*

*Queyras, Freiburg Baroque Orch, Heras-Casado*

*(5/16) (HARM) HMC90 2197*

## Tchaikovsky

**Violin Concerto, Op 35. String Quartet No 3, Op 30 (arr Weithaas/Steuir)**

**Camerata Bern / Antje Weithaas** *vn*

AVI-Music © AVI8553393 (77' • DDD)



'A gracefully elegant, thoroughly aristocratic Russian' is how the German

violinist Antje Weithaas describes Tchaikovsky in her booklet note. She professes her desire to take his Violin Concerto away from being a virtuoso showpiece, making it more of a chamber collaboration. To this effect, she succeeds, in close partnership with Camerata Bern, who play without a conductor. Hers is an unassuming, unhurried account that shies away from heart-on-sleeve passions.

Weithaas steals in sweetly in the first movement, her tone clean and with minimum vibrato. Even her double-stopping sounds efficient and clinical rather than impassioned and her precise treatment of the cadenza (from 10'10") is a little like treading over glass, skating over the concerto's emotional core. This isn't a rethinking of the score as radical as Patricia Kopatchinskaja's controversial recording but it has a detached quality which I find altogether too cool.

There is an attractive sweetness to her muted tone in the Canzonetta, which doesn't wallow, with lovely woodwind exchanges. Her articulation in the finale is excellent, with some emphatic double bass drones giving a Russian flavour to the dance. But for a fiery, earthier account – the virtuoso show-stopper Weithaas is keen to depart from – I'd recommend Nemanja Radulović's recent account, with

Esther Yoo's more emotionally contained reading coming midway between the two (both DG).

The coupling is puzzling. Weithaas and Käthi Steuri have arranged the Third String Quartet in E flat minor for 14 strings and it has the slightly anodyne feeling that the *Souvenir de Florence* can suffer in its string orchestra version. The arrangement blurs the quartet's edges and drags its feet. Radulović's disc closed with another questionable arrangement – the *Rococo* Variations for viola and small ensemble including piano. When Tchaikovsky's other violin concertante pieces are so attractive and fill a disc so perfectly, dubious fillers remain a mystery. **Mark Pullinger**

*Violin Concerto – selected comparisons:*

Yoo, Philb Orch, Asbkenazy (8/17) (DG) 481 5032

Kopatchinskaja, MusicAeterna, Currentzis

(2/16) (SONY) 88875 16512-2

Radulović, Borusan Istanbul PO, Goetzl

(2/18) (DG) 479 8089GH

## Urspruch

Piano Concerto, Op 9<sup>a</sup>. Symphony, Op 14<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Oliver Triendl *pf*

Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie /

<sup>a</sup>Georg Fritzsche, <sup>b</sup>Marcus Bosch

CPO ② CPO555 194-2 (92' • DDD)

Recorded <sup>b</sup>2006, <sup>a</sup>2009



By coincidence, on the day this CPO disc arrived for review I was engaged in

researching the booklet for a future issue of this same previously unrecorded concerto. So let me be the first to tell you that Anton Urspruch was born and died in Frankfurt (1850–1907), was a pupil of Raff and Liszt among others, and made his career as a teacher and composer. He also wrote an influential book on Gregorian Chant (published 1901) and married the daughter of the music publisher August Cranz.

Unsurprisingly, his E flat Concerto, Op 9, was published by that house. It is a fine work, though with an overlong (22'09") first movement, a pastoral idyll with an attractive lilt and pretty themes in which the piano remains almost wholly subdued. The second movement finds it principally in accompanying mode, woodwind ensemble and solos dominating, while the finale finally offers the soloist the chance to let loose with several different lively treatments of its earworm principal subject that threatens to become 'My heart ever faithful' from

Bach's Cantata No 68. It is tremendously well played by Oliver Triendl, who has made a career of digging up such rarely performed works as this. The piece would sit very well in the Hyperion Romantic Piano Concerto series – as indeed it will at a future date, coupled with one of the really great examples of the genre, the F sharp minor Concerto of Hans von Bronsart.

CPO, on the other hand, has decided to leave Triendl's splendid performance on its own short-time disc (41'39") and accompany it on a second CD with more Urspruch in E flat major: his Symphony, Op 14. It is a long work (four movements lasting a little over 50 minutes in this performance) which, on my first and subsequent hearings, failed to hold my attention. The CD booklet (as discursive in its quaint English translation as the music it discusses) reveals that a critic in 1881, following the symphony's premiere in Wiesbaden, opined that 'Brahms is the only other composer who could have written it!' One sees what the critic means so far as orchestration, texture and craftsmanship are concerned; but whereas Brahms gives you a clear route map and sends you down the street singing, Urspruch meanders and, to be frank, stops well short of genius. The Scherzo is the best movement, while the vigorous finale, with its nods to Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Schumann, is the most arresting. The symphony was performed regularly until about 1900. Whether it has sufficient appeal today to make a return to the repertoire I very much doubt. **Jeremy Nicholas**

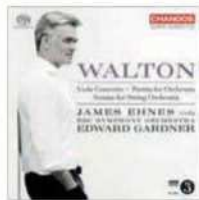
## Walton

Viola Concerto<sup>a</sup>. Partita. Sonata

<sup>a</sup>James Ehnes *va*

BBC Symphony Orchestra / Edward Gardner

Chandos ② CHSA5210 (66' • DDD/DSD)



It's not just critics who get things wrong. Even great soloists have occasionally

rejected concertos before changing their minds. Nikolay Rubinstein was scornful of Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto at a play-through before later becoming an advocate, while Leopold Auer initially refused to touch the same composer's Violin Concerto, which had been dedicated to him. At the suggestion of Thomas Beecham, William Walton wrote his Viola Concerto for Lionel Tertis, who rejected the manuscript out of hand, at which point

Paul Hindemith stepped in to give the premiere at a 1929 Proms concert. Tertis changed his mind and championed the concerto, later performing it at the Three Choirs Festival in 1932 (where Elgar was less than impressed).

That Walton's is one of the great concertos written for the viola cannot be doubted, especially when you consider the number of violinists who have muscled in to take it into their repertoire. Yehudi Menuhin recorded it in 1968, under the composer's baton, an account which set a trend for leisurely tempos in the *Andante comodo* first movement. Nigel Kennedy (1987) and Maxim Vengerov (2002) followed, to which may now be added this splendid new account from James Ehnes with the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Edward Gardner.

What is immediately apparent is that Ehnes and Gardner take us back to those pre-Menuhin tempos, only a fraction slower than William Primrose's pioneering 1946 recording. There's a grand sweep to the performance which is wholly engaging in its refusal to wallow. Ehnes's burnished viola tone is noble and warm, without Vengerov's lushness but also without its tendency to cloy. The *Vivo* middle movement dances along in the highest of spirits, while Ehnes's playing in the finale balances sweetness with energy.

Gardner keeps things moving, the BBC SO romping along in the opening movement (5'02") and the bassoon bouncing jauntily to introduce the finale. Vengerov and Rostropovich drag this out to well beyond 16 minutes, whereas Ehnes and Gardner are done soon after the 11-minute mark, without compromising on the satisfying sense of repose in the concerto's hushed coda. A winning interpretation.

In his third volume of Walton, Gardner conducts a lithe performance of the Sonata for string orchestra (Walton's arrangement – at Neville Marriner's suggestion – of his First String Quartet) and a suitably boisterous Partita to fill out the disc. The *Toccata* swaggers along with tremendous vigour, the BBC SO brass in great form and in characteristically red-blooded Chandos sound, while the *Giga burlesca* finale is guaranteed to raise a smile. **Mark Pullinger**

*Viola Concerto – selected comparisons:*

Primrose, Philb Orch, Walton (10/46<sup>R</sup>) (NAXO) 8 110316

Menuhin, New Philb Orch, Walton (4/70<sup>R</sup>, 7/00<sup>R</sup>)

(EMI/WARN) 2564 63393-9 or 968944-2

Kennedy, RPO, Previn (1/88<sup>R</sup>) (EMI/WARN) ② 094708-2

Vengerov, LSO, Rostropovich

(7/03<sup>R</sup>) (EMI/WARN) 984435-2



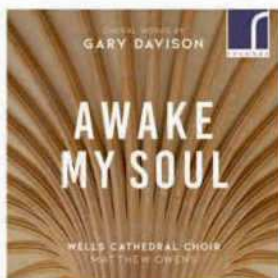


J.S. Bach:  
Partitas BWV 825-830  
Mennno Van Delft clavichord



Sera d'inverno: Songs by Ildebrando Pizzetti  
Hanna Hipp mezzo-soprano  
Emma Abbate piano

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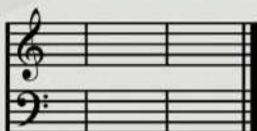


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## Widmann

Viola Concerto<sup>a</sup>. 24 Duos - excs (arr Tamestit)<sup>b</sup>.  
String Quartet No 3, 'Jagdquartett'<sup>c</sup>  
<sup>a</sup>Antoine Tamestit *va* <sup>b</sup>Marc Bouchkov *vn*  
<sup>b</sup>Bruno Philippe *vc* <sup>c</sup>Signum Quartet; <sup>a</sup>Bavarian  
Radio Symphony Orchestra / Daniel Harding  
Harmonia Mundi © HMM90 2268 (49' • DDD)



Still in his mid-forties, Jörg Widmann has a sizeable discography as a composer, clarinettist and now conductor. This latest release focuses on a Viola Concerto (2015) written for Antoine Tamestit, and as much a concerto for its dedicatee as for his instrument; not least in the way interaction is enhanced by onstage events, the soloist moving to various points on the stage according to the music being heard. This is most perceptible in the textural contrasts of the first movement, culminating in a massive chord from where the slow movement attempts a more sustained dialogue, summarily obliterated by the explosive force of its brief successors, before the finale attempts a measure of repose which perhaps feels gratuitous as an outcome.

What is undeniable is the commitment of Tamestit as he plays, moves and sometimes shouts his way through a score more distinctive for its gestural immediacy than its thematic content. He combines with Marc Bouchkov and Bruno Philippe in a specially arranged selection from the *24 Duos* (2008), whose expressive profile is redolent of those gnomic miniatures by Kurtág – at least until a 'Lamento' as poised and affecting as anything Widmann has composed. After this, the Third Quartet (2003) makes for a rather jarring conclusion. Its tensile propulsion is rendered with panache by the Signum Quartet, yet this scherzo is more productively heard within the context of Widmann's series of five quartets as played by the Leipzig or Minguet ensembles.

Finely recorded and amply documented, this release remains short measure: given its built-in visual dimension, would a DVD presentation of the Viola Concerto not have been feasible? **Richard Whitehouse**

*String Quartet No 3 – selected comparisons:*

*Leipzig Qt (DABR) MDG307 1531-2*

*Minguet Qt (WERG) WER73162*

## 'Before Mozart'

'Early Horn Concertos'

**Förster** Horn Concerto [No 1] **Haydn** Horn Concerto No 1, HobVII:d:3 **L Mozart** Sinfonia da camera, VII:d5 **Neruda** Horn Concerto **Telemann** Horn Concerto, TWV51:D8

Alec Frank-Gemmill *hn*

Swedish Chamber Orchestra / Nicholas McGegan  
BIS © BIS2315 (66' • DDD/DSD)



'WA Mozart may have written the greatest works for horn and orchestra but this

should not lead us to define the instrument, and its repertory, too narrowly', Alec Frank-Gemmill writes in a booklet note for his survey of concertos by Mozart's predecessors, a wonderful album, which combines intelligence with music-making of the highest order.

Eighteenth-century composers, Frank-Gemmill tells us, sought to redefine the instrument's potential by freeing it from its perennial association with hunting. So Telemann's Concerto in D major inhabits a world of courtly refinement, while Förster's First Concerto is almost operatic in its heightened sense of drama. Leopold Mozart's exquisite *Sinfonia da camera* repositions the horn as a member of a chamber ensemble, engaging in a succession of dialogues with a group of solo strings, and Neruda's wonderfully elegant E flat Concerto exploits the lyrical capabilities of the 'clarino' registers at the top of the instrument's range. 'Clarino' playing, however, gradually became unfashionable towards the century's close, as new generations of players developed the potential of the horn's lower registers. Among them was Joseph Leutgeb, for whom Haydn composed his First Concerto in 1762 and for whom Mozart wrote his concertos more than 20 years later.

We have little idea as to exactly what types of horns were in use in the mid-18th century, and it is only thanks to modern innovations in horn design, Frank-Gemmill reminds us, that it 'is once more possible to perform all of these early concertos, including parts previously considered impossibly high'. Even so, the technical challenges are formidable, and he meets them with an assurance that often takes your breath away. Neruda's vertiginous lines ascend into the stratospheres with astonishing ease and Haydn's rapid-fire figurations are done with effortless dexterity. Nothing is vacuously showy, however: virtuosity is consistently placed at the service of expression; cadenzas are integrated into the musical argument; and each concerto is sharply differentiated in mood from its fellows, so that Telemann's aristocratic poise contrasts with Förster's greater emotional urgency and Leopold Mozart's playful elegance.

Nicholas McGegan is equally at home in this repertory, meanwhile. The Swedish Chamber Orchestra play with wonderful freshness and finesse, and there's a flawless sense of ensemble between Frank-Gemmill and the solo strings in the *Sinfonia da camera*. An exceptional disc that confirms and consolidates his reputation as one of today's finest horn players, it makes for compelling and essential listening.

Tim Ashley

## 'Münchner Philharmoniker at the Proms 2016'

Berlioz *La damnation de Faust*, Op 24 -

Hungarian March **Rachmaninov** Piano

Concerto No 3, Op 30<sup>a</sup> **Ravel** Boléro **R Strauss**

Der Rosenkavalier - Suite **Ustvol'skaya**

Symphony No 3, 'Jesus Messiah, Save Us!'<sup>b</sup>

<sup>b</sup>Alexei Petrenko *reciter* <sup>a</sup>Behzod Abduraimov *pf*

Munich Philharmonic Orchestra / Valery Gergiev

Naxos © DVD 2 110572; © NBD0073V

(111' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • O)

Recorded live at the Royal Albert Hall, London,  
July 18, 2016



If the indefatigable Valery Gergiev remains controversial for reasons as much political as musical, the Munich

Philharmonic, which prospered artistically under Sergiu Celibidache between 1979 and 1996, has skeletons of its own. The extension of Gergiev's contract well into the next decade suggests that both parties see the partnership as opening a new and fruitful chapter. The 2016 Proms appearance immortalised here doesn't offer definitive aesthetic confirmation. The programme is too eccentric for that.

Meticulously controlled rather than jazz-inflected, *Boléro*'s dark implacability may impress. Behzod Abduraimov's 'Rach Three' is more surprising. We're used to Gergiev partnering barnstorming Russians like Denis Matsuev in this repertoire but Abduraimov (Uzbek-born, American-based) adds a singing tenderness and a subtler, more varied tonal palette. A pity he is placed rather forward in the mix, the sound team capturing some of his instrument's internal mechanism. With no lack of infectious brilliance this is unmistakably an exceptional performance, outshining his studio recordings to date. The more difficult, chordal cadenza is chosen for the first movement and played superbly. The finale is slightly cut: you can see Gergiev turning over pages from 51'09".





Freshness and finesse: Alec Frank-Gemmill and the Swedish Chamber Orchestra show that there is more to 18th-century horn concertos than Mozart

Next we are pitched into Galina Ustvolskaya's spare and intimidating sound world. Projecting tortured desperation rather than religious confidence, her *Symphony No 3* has an actorly role for the late Alexei Petrenko. The imploring text is not subtitled although it is printed in the programme booklet, yet another which manages to discuss the works in a running order all its own. We don't see the stage hands rearranging the seating to accommodate the suite from Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* purportedly concocted by Artur Rodzinski. Presented in unapologetic style, the strings' contribution is suitably lush. Of the encores heard in concert only the Hungarian March from Berlioz's *Damnation of Faust* survives.

This is a no-frills production, cut down from BBC material with series music at the outset, tacky lighting in the hall and abrupt fades replacing linking commentary. Coughing is audible throughout as are the maestro's guttural attempts at singing along. Both audio and visuals are vivid however: a Blu-ray option is available.

David Gutman

## 'Through the Lens of Time'

**Brotons** *Variacions sobre un tema barroc*  
**M Richter** *The Four Seasons Recomposed*<sup>a</sup>  
**Schnittke** *Suite in the Old Style*<sup>b</sup>  
**Yun** *Königliches Thema*  
**Francisco Fullana** *vn*<sup>b</sup> **David Fung** *pf*  
<sup>b</sup>*City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra /*  
**Carlos Izcaray**  
 Orchid © ORC100080 (73' • DDD)



As its title suggests, Francisco Fullana's debut recording 'Through the Lens of Time' sees the talented Spanish violinist bring together four diverse works which, in different ways, engage with the music of the past.

The most obvious and direct engagement appears in the form of Max Richter's *The Four Seasons Recomposed* (2012), wherein the composer tries to recapture the first flush and frisson of excitement he experienced as a child from first hearing Vivaldi's well-known work. Fullana captures this innocence in a way that Daniel Hope's far more assertive and outwardly expressive performance does not (DG, 2/13), and is more in keeping with the Baroque spirit of the original.

'Spring' opens with an ever-increasing panoply of looping birdsong-like fragments drawn from Vivaldi above a Coldplay-inspired chord sequence, and Richter's synthesis of pop and minimalism has brought him some success as a composer for film and TV. This is something we may not readily associate with Alfred Schnittke, yet the Russian's salvaging from the cutting-room floor of musical material originally designed for the cinema screen brought about his *Suite in the Old Style*. Rarely straying beyond pastiche, the suite nevertheless reflects Schnittke's innate understanding and appreciation of 18th-century dance forms. Fullana imparts a spirited dancelike quality throughout, including the fugue movement, and is adequately supported by David Fung's unfussy accompaniment. Catalan composer Salvador Brotons's unremarkable *Variacions sobre un tema barroc* also keeps close to the 18th-century song upon which it draws.

The highlight, however, is Fullana's account of the Korean mid-20th-century composer Isang Yun's *Königliches Thema* for solo violin. By turns terse and explosive, Fullana's compelling performance counters any criticisms that his playing sometimes lacks weight and muscularity. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

# Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition

**Andreas Haefliger** tells *Hugo Shirley* about the opportunities hidden inside this solo piano work

‘For me, obviously,’ says Andreas Haefliger, ‘this piece stands out in my repertoire.’ The Swiss pianist readily admits that *Pictures at an Exhibition* is an exception in a repertoire that has tended to be ‘extremely Germanic’. But he makes no apology. ‘You can really let your imagination roam. My childhood was not just steeped in the piano. I read a tremendous amount – fairy tales – and my fantasy world grew. This is a piece where [that aspect] can come out.’ Later on, he elaborates: ‘I feel that a large portion of what we do as pianists is create worlds, and for those worlds we don’t need intellectualism. We need imagination.’

I’m speaking to Haefliger on a video call to Vienna, and it immediately becomes clear that his approach to Mussorgsky’s 1874 masterpiece, which he has just recorded for BIS, is a holistic one: as broadly imaginative and broadly musical as possible. His father was the tenor Ernst, and during our traversal of the score, Haefliger sings out passages in solfège, often to underline the motivic threads that run through the work. He is also drawn as much to the different Promenade sections that link the work’s 10 ‘pictures’ together as those pictures themselves. ‘They anticipate the feeling of the next piece,’ he suggests. ‘If you want to take it in a picturesque way, he’s walking through the exhibition, and part of his soul is still with the painting he just saw, and the other part is already looking over there [towards the next picture].’

‘When I look at the first bars, I’m always fascinated by the unevenness of the rhythm,’ Haefliger continues, as we open the score. There’s the theory, he acknowledges, that that unevenness might represent Mussorgsky’s own wonky gait as he wanders through his imaginary gallery. But the pianist sees this as indicative of one of the challenges in performing a descriptive work like this. ‘It’s not the description itself: it’s the description of the emotional element,’ he stipulates. Another risk with Mussorgsky’s work, for listeners possibly more than performers, is to be able to hear it without the influence of Ravel’s famous orchestration.

Haefliger’s attitude towards this is relatively relaxed, though: he likes the whip-crack that the French composer adds to the end of ‘Gnomus’ and bears in mind the sound of Ravel’s saxophone during ‘The Old Castle’. ‘The ear gets drawn to a different voice already,’ he says as we take a closer look at the Promenade that precedes that movement, ‘which is the voice that will then play the *cantabile* in the next movement.’ And for one of several occasions during our talk he also draws attention to Mussorgsky’s use of rests, pointing here to the quaver rests in bars 4 and 8. ‘They usually get kind of ignored, but for me they sound like a gasp, as if your breath has been taken away for a second.’

‘The Old Castle’ itself, is for Haefliger, ‘a simple canvas’, while the next picture, ‘Tuileries’, is, he summarises, ‘the depiction of the chattering, the [children] quarrelling’ – before singing a snarling, exaggerated version of its opening bars: ‘Neeen-num, neeen-num!’ This, he adds, is one of the most difficult movements.



Discussions with producer Markus Heiland (above); Haefliger with the score (below)

I ask the pianist more generally about the technical challenges of the piece. Haefliger’s answer is revealing. ‘If you’re actually trying to get the effect that’s on the page, it’s extremely hard. If you play it a little louder or a little slower or you don’t observe the legato markings or the phrasing, then it’s ok.’

‘Bydlo’ (‘Ox-cart’) offers different challenges. ‘It’s really about how much sound you can produce without breaking the piano, without breaking the ears ... the suggestion of these



massive muscles, of something not wanting to move. For me it's pleasurable, because you can really knead the left hand.' We move on to address the next Promenade. 'This switch and the break in the registers is one of the great moments in the piece,' Haefliger affirms, 'and the harmonisation is really stunning. With this one in particular, I always make a point when I practise it to play only three of the voices then sing the other, so that I'm completely aware of all the movement.'

For Haefliger, 'Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks' is 'a lot of notes and very quick tempo'. Here, once more, he draws attention to an apparently minor detail involving rests. 'In the trio, you see the F that's played in the left hand with the thumb? You have quaver rests and then when you go into the minor it suddenly becomes a sustained note ... it's really amazing writing.' Next comes 'Goldenberg and Schmuyle'. Haefliger acknowledges the dangers of this movement, and how it can prompt arguments about anti-Semitism in music, but our discussion here prompts him to show me the view from his apartment. His music room looks out on to Vienna's main synagogue, the Stadttempel, and is on the same level as the Kantor's office. They often wave at each other across the road, he tells me, and one time, when they met outside, Haefliger asked about the melody of this movement. The encounter ended up with them singing it to each other in the street, with the pianist – his pride tangible when he recounts the story – receiving the seal of approval for the authenticity of his intonation.

*'As pianists, we create fantasy worlds, and for those worlds we don't need intellectualism – we need imagination'*


Yet another turn of the page and we have arrived at 'The Market Place at Limoges'. 'The chattering: you can really hear them get at each other,' Haefliger observes. It's another of the difficult movements – possibly the most difficult – he says, but primarily, again, because of 'just simply doing everything that's on the page'. We reach 'Catacombs', which Haefliger describes, along with the ethereal version of the Promenade that grows out of it, as 'the most psychological pieces in the cycle. You really hear how you've looked at these skeletons...this flicker of life in the hollow eyes.' We turn further. 'And "Baba-Yaga" ... we have just again to be thankful that somebody wrote this for us! The potential of the sound you can create, the technical challenge, the psychological fierceness of the image. This is why I became a pianist: I am orchestra, conductor and storyteller all at once, and there's nobody interfering!'

We arrive at 'The Great Gate of Kiev', or the 'most famous deviation of the Promenade theme', as Haefliger describes it. Here, he says, there are 'great opportunities for sound', but also the need for patience: 'You don't deviate from the tempo; you just keep it steady. And then it gets really bigger and bigger ... and bigger and bigger. But if you look at the page you see the sparseness of the writing. It's a space that asks to be filled, filled with sound and intention. It's as if you're stretching a rubber band right to its limits. You always have to be asking for that sound from the piano and saying, *please give me more!*'

► For our review of Haefliger's Pictures at an Exhibition, turn to page 69

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GRAMOPHONE JUNE 2018 49

# Chamber



## Charlotte Gardner on arrangements of Boccherini for violin and harpsichord:

*'These are brought off with a neat and gentle approach that's a perfect fit for Boccherini's dainty melodies'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 52**



## David Threasher contrasts a pair of Schubert 'Trout' Quintets:

*'There's a special Viennese lilt at the end of the variations and a gamboling simplicity to the rustic finale'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 55**

## Laurie Anderson

Landfall

Laurie Anderson *voc/vn/kybds/samples/perc/filters*

Kronos Quartet

Nonesuch © 7559 79338-9 (70' • DDD)



In late 2012 Hurricane Sandy struck New York City, causing widespread flooding,

chaos and carnage. *Landfall* represents Laurie Anderson's response to the disaster and its aftermath.

Regarded as one of the most important creative artists of her generation, Anderson (and her husband, the late Lou Reed) were directly affected by the superstorm. They returned to their New York apartment after the storm had subsided only to find the contents of their basement – keyboards, projectors, props, files, papers, books – in Anderson's words, 'floating there in shiny black water, dissolving ... all the things I had carefully saved all my life becoming nothing but junk'.

Working alongside the Kronos Quartet, Anderson turned the experience into a series of arresting reflections. The mood is set in the opening track, 'CNN Predicts a Monster Storm', where a fragile rising figure on violin in bare open fifths is stated against a solitary drone on D. Stark Phrygian-intoned melodies on solo cello are heard against the ambient shudder of an empty city while stuttering strings seek cover from the howling gale. A whole panoply of electronic loops, patterns and pulses provide unsettling backdrops to yearning, undulating melodic patterns. This is not so much programmatic music but music programmed to evoke memories of grief, melancholy and loss.

Often seen performing on her trademark white electronic violin, Anderson transfers the grain of the instrument – the creaking and swaying and smell of its rosin – 'from the noise floor and into the music itself': in the composer's words, to make music that is full of the sounds of its own making. The

Kronos quartet's evocative playing brings these sounds – and the experiences they represent – vividly back to life. As Anderson states, 'Language is about loss and in a way words are memorials to things and to states'; but it is her music that ultimately serves to imbue these memories with thoughts, feelings and emotions. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

## Bacewicz

Piano Quintets<sup>a</sup> – No 1; No 2. Quartet for

Four Violins<sup>b</sup>. Quartet for Four Cellos<sup>c</sup>

<sup>b</sup>Krzysztof Lason, <sup>b</sup>Małgorzata Wasiucionek *vns*

<sup>a</sup>Wojciech Świątała *pf* <sup>a</sup>Silesian Quartet (<sup>b</sup>Szymon

<sup>b</sup>Krzysztof, Arkadiusz Kubica *vns* Łukasz

Syrnicki *va* Piotr Janosik *vc*); <sup>a</sup>Polish Cello Quartet

Chandos © CHAN10976 (64' • DDD)



One of the joys of reviewing is when a minor composer belatedly receives their

due. This isn't one of those cases, for the simple reason that Grażyna Bacewicz is emphatically not a minor composer. The Silesian Quartet's *Gramophone* Award-winning Chandos cycle of her string quartets (8/16) made a powerful case for Bacewicz as a 20th-century master of the form on a par with Shostakovich and Tippett. This new disc reinforces that conclusion: this is the potent, instantly communicative music of a larger-than-life artistic personality.

For proof, start with the Violin Quartet (1949) and notice how, even in music intended for students, Bacewicz instantly establishes a sense of character and musical purpose. Much of that is down to her command of string textures, and time and again Bacewicz uses that command to shape the emotional direction of her larger-scale works. A cello wails like a siren over the oppressive opening of the 1963 Cello Quartet; *sal ponticello* shivers crackle in the Second Piano Quintet (1965), while quiet violin glissandos fall like meteors against a darkening sky. The piano chimes softly, a warning bell amid the sombre mists that

open the Second Quintet's *Larghetto*; and elsewhere swoops from the top to the bottom of its register in grand, dazzling runs.

Again, then: a huge personality. Bacewicz can generate irresistible symphonic momentum in the space of a four-minute movement and integrates eloquent bleakness with some of the sharpest, most light-footed musical wit since Haydn. If you've already got the Silesians' Bacewicz quartet cycle, be assured that these performances share the same emotional commitment, attention to detail and electrifying verve. If you haven't: well, this disc deserves to make a lot of converts. **Richard Bratby**

## JS Bach

Sonatas for Flute and Harpsichord - BWV1013; BWV1030; BWV1032; BWV1034; BWV1035

Marc Hantaï *fl* Pierre Hantaï *pf*

Mirare © MIR370 (74' • DDD)



While I can't claim to have heard every recording of JS Bach's works for solo flute and harpsichord in the catalogue, I've listened to quite a few. Brothers Marc and Pierre Hantaï's is the best I've come across.

This is of course a highly subjective statement. Well, yes and no. Favourites – such as those by Lisa Beznosiuk, Rachel Brown, Ashley Solomon, Emmanuel Pahud (on modern flute) and Hantaï's master himself, Barthold Kuijken – exhibit a level of technical accomplishment and interpretative insight that is perfectly susceptible to critical analysis. What separates this recording from those is the extent to which the brothers embrace the music's rhetoric while sounding less learnt than natural. Which is, you might counter, simply another very sophisticated use of oratory. Whatever. Start listening and you won't be able to stop.

To focus on Marc for a moment and the odd man out, the Solo (Partita) for





Memories of grief, melancholy and loss: Laurie Anderson is joined by the Kronos Quartet in her arresting *Landfall*

unaccompanied flute: the antique dances sway between speech and song, the articulation, the rhythmic and tonal shadings adumbrating harmonic progressions with absolute fluency. To bring *Pierre* into the picture, right from the opening *Adagio* of the E major Sonata there is a sense of luxuriant, almost divine peace and tranquillity which one finds again in the *Largo* of the B minor Sonata. It's as much to do with the sensitivity of breath and touch as it is to do with the authentic instrument's natural sonorities. Elsewhere, it is a lithe, *détaché* approach and tasteful ornamentation which so gently animates the faster movements. In short, this is playing of the greatest subtlety and discernment. **William Yeoman**

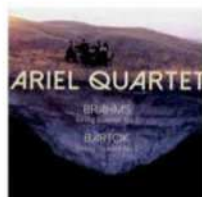
## Bartók • Brahms

**Bartók** String Quartet No 1, Sz40

**Brahms** String Quartet No 2, Op 51 No 2

**Ariel Quartet**

AVIE © AV2384 (66' • DDD)



The Ariel Quartet was formed in Jerusalem nearly 20 years ago when its members – barely into their teens at the time – met in a chamber music class. Here, on their

debut recording, the precision and tonal polish they've honed over two decades is on proud display. Musically, too, they have much to offer, elucidating the often meaty textures of Brahms's A minor Quartet without sacrificing any of its warm luxuriance. And in Bartók's First, they negotiate the rhythmic intricacies of the finale with such deftness that I had the distinct (and delightful) sense of the composer glancing back across the 19th century to Haydn.

The Ariel can enchant, as they do in the *Quasi minueto* movement of the Brahms, with its nostalgic, Old World melancholy. And their confident unanimity allows them to convey ferocity without ever seeming to break a sweat – listen, say, to how neatly and nimbly they sprint through the Bartók's final pages. I'm not convinced such sleek virtuosity is what this music demands, mind you. To my ears, the Véghe's style of emotionally involved storytelling (*Naïve*, 3/87) gets considerably closer to the heart of Bartók's score.

Still, I am less bothered by the Ariel's efforts to smooth over rough edges than I am by their occasional tendency towards metric obduracy. They play with appropriate elasticity in the Brahms, for example, taking time where the music's

punctuation requires it, but all too often I feel the ghostly presence of beat and bar line. It's there in the opening theme, as well as in the sweeter second subject (at 1'20"), where the Ariel, for all their tender expressivity, seem to trudge doggedly from beat to beat. Turn for comparison to the Belcea (Alpha, 10/16), who make these same melodies soar and sway.

Given the many exemplary qualities of these interpretations, I wouldn't be surprised if the Ariel are simply unaccustomed to working in the recording studio. In any case, I'm eager to hear more. A live recording next, perhaps?

**Andrew Farach-Colton**

## Beethoven

'Sonatas for Piano & Violin, Vol 2'

Violin Sonatas – No 4, Op 23;

No 5, 'Spring', Op 24; No 7, Op 30 No 2

**Chloë Hanslip** *vn* **Danny Driver** *pf*

Rubicon © RCD1011 (68' • DDD)

Recorded live at Turner Sims Concert Hall, Southampton, May 4, 2017



'It's not always about making the most beautiful sound ... some of the writing is

quite violent ...’ So observed Chloë Hanslip to Charlotte Gardner in a fascinating interview about the Beethoven violin sonatas (10/17) as recorded live with Danny Driver over three recitals at Southampton’s Turner Sims Hall. In the same interview Driver remarked on the ‘look-what-I-can-do’ aspects of Beethoven’s piano-writing. These and other aspects of the music are fully realised in performance by two ‘engaging and extremely accomplished artists’, as Richard Bratby aptly described them when reviewing the first volume of this Rubicon series (11/17).

RB found the performances leading, in general, towards understatement. At times, yes, I’d agree, but for me they’re also full of interpretative interest, eschewing as they do surface warmth for the sake of boldness, Hanslip sometimes moderating vibrato in pursuit of a cooler sound than we’re used to from her. Then again she’ll summon it back again for, to give a specific example, the sweet opening of the *Spring* Sonata. I love the duo’s ‘careful-as-you-tread’ approach to the Op 23 A minor Sonata’s *Andante scherzoso, più allegretto*, and in the *Spring*’s *Adagio molto espressivo* the ebb and flow of Hanslip’s playing, the way she glides upwards at the note’s centre, again varying vibrato as the music suggests, which proves that this 30-year-old has become a truly formidable musician. There are real ingredients at play here, and Driver’s contribution is powerful but never overwhelming.

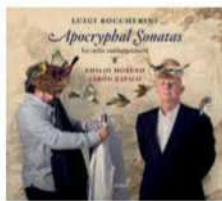
I like the balance too, Hanslip’s sometimes gutsy attack never allowed to upstage the all-important piano part. The opening *Allegro con brio* of the stormy C minor Sonata, No 7, is a perfect case in point. The same sonata’s *Adagio cantabile* has a tremulous beauty about it that reminded me a little of Adolf Busch, and Hanslip’s ability to reduce her a tone to a mere whisper (try from 2’28” on track 9) is quite remarkable. The Scherzo isn’t too fast, allowing the effect of the music’s implied badinage to fully register, while the finale is also sensibly paced. I’d never before realised just how much the closing page or so anticipates the close of the *Kreutzer* Sonata. A fine disc, then, that encapsulates highly intelligent performances and which augurs well for the next volume in the series. **Rob Cowan**

## Boccherini

‘Apocryphal Sonatas for Violin and Harpsichord’ Sonatas – G24/4, originally Trio, Op 14 No 4 G98B; G43, originally Quartet, Op 2 No 1 G159; ‘La Tirana’, originally Quartettino, Op 44 No 4 G223; ‘La seguidilla’, originally Quintettino, Op 50 No 5 G374

**Emilio Moreno** *vn* **Aarón Zapico** *hpd*

Glossa © GCD920315 (60’ • DDD)



This disc’s cover image – violinist Emilio Moreno selecting a patterned shirt from a bundle on a hanger, jacket gripped in his mouth as birds frolic in a nest atop his head, while harpsichordist Aarón Zapico stands by with his own head sliced open to accommodate an equally inhabited bird’s nest – makes one assume that there is some significance to be discerned. However, having pored over the booklet notes I still can’t explain with any confidence what’s going on here. My limp guess would be that, with the disc’s musical contents being four violin and keyboard transcriptions of Boccherini works which began life scored for other forces – two contemporary reworkings and two by Moreno and Zapico themselves – we might see the shirt shape as an ‘original design’, and choosing patterns akin to choosing which forces to rearrange it for. Maybe.

The booklet notes are a bit curious too, being a rebuttal against those who claim arrangements are less valid than ‘originals’; does anyone actually think that of 18th-century music, given we all know that everyone from Bach to Handel to Haydn recycled and recycled? My advice therefore is to focus entirely on this disc’s audio contents, because these consist of beautifully worked arrangements, brought off with a neat and gentle approach that’s a perfect fit for Boccherini’s dainty melodies. Moreno on his 1761 Gagliano is sunny of outlook and sweetly austere of playing style, articulation subtly detached, with vibrato switching between light and none. Zapico, meanwhile, is eloquent on a smoothly delicate and sonorous copy of a Spanish harpsichord; a keyboard nationality no doubt reflecting Boccherini’s adopted country, and an especially nice touch given it’s not one that crops up all that regularly on disc. **Charlotte Gardner**

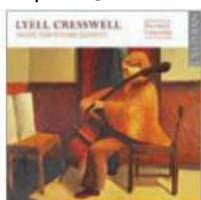
## Cresswell

Capricci. Kotetete – 1st movt.

Ricercari. String Quartet

Red Note Ensemble

Delphian © DCD34199 (61’ • DDD)



Born in New Zealand though long resident in Edinburgh, Lyell Cresswell (b1944) is

among those ‘well-respected if not widely known’ composers whose work is both approachable and unpredictable. This new disc of (mainly) string quartet music offers a chance to find out why.

A fine instance is *Capricci* (2014), its 10 short movements ranging widely and imaginatively over traditional dance forms and rhythms. Highlights include the third, a graceful ‘*Siciliana*’ informed by reticent humour; the sixth, an engaging play on Ligeti-like ostinato patterns that fully lives up to its ‘Sprocket’ title; and the ninth, a ‘Brawl’ rendering its round-dance origins with graphic immediacy. At under 20 minutes these pieces are best heard in the context of the set overall, as also are *Ricercari* (2016). Among the nine miniatures for violin and cello, the odd-numbered ones are variations on a ‘theme’ that comes closest to being stated in the fifth, ‘Mesto’; themselves intercut by an animated succession of scherzos and caccias, the overall sequence is inspired by the techniques of the Italian painter Maurizio Bottarelli (b1943).

Most substantial here is the String Quartet, completed in 1981 though revised 18 years later so its original format of four movements in two parts was condensed down to three separate movements. Taking its cue from the tradition of Gaelic psalm-singing, where melodic lines are absorbed into melisma, the work unfolds from heady accumulation then dispersal of such ornaments, via a series of solos and duos separated by visceral unison ‘bands’ of repeated notes, to an intense confrontation of ornamented and linear writing prior to a decisive close.

The initial ‘Mormorante’ from *Kotetete* (2011, its title Maori for ‘chattering’) provides a capricious rounding-off. The virtuosity of the Red Note Ensemble’s playing makes for a warm recommendation, not least for those still to encounter Cresswell’s distinctive sound world.

**Richard Whitehouse**

## Debussy • Fauré • Franck

‘Beau soir’

Debussy *Beau soir*. La fille aux cheveux de lin (transcr A Hartmann) Fauré Violin Sonata No 1, Op 13. Berceuse, Op 16 Franck Violin Sonata.

Panis angelicus (arr Kenner)

Kyung Wha Chung *vn* Kevin Kenner *pf*

Warner Classics © 9029 57080-8 (64’ • DDD)



The name of Kyung Wha Chung automatically compels respect, and it might



be argued that if any artist has earned the right to revisit repertoire that she first recorded over four decades ago, it's Chung. Her 1977 account of the Franck Sonata with Radu Lupu on piano is universally, and rightly, regarded as a benchmark.

And perhaps it might have been better to leave it at that. This grandiloquent new recording with Kevin Kenner is still unquestionably the work of a violinist of extraordinary powers: a ripe, dark lower register, high notes of piercing brilliance and a commanding sense of the music's drama and sweep. Kenner, too, draws some limpid sounds from his piano in both the Franck and the Fauré A major Sonata: again, the playing compels respect.

But I wouldn't say it compels affection. There are mannered, self-conscious phrases; intonation that occasionally seems to distort under pressure, and a recorded balance that, intentionally or not, places Chung emphatically front and centre, at the expense of any real dialogue between the performers (the development section in the first movement of the Fauré is a particular missed opportunity).

True, there's never any question that we're in the presence of a major musical personality here, but interpretations that might have been convincing in the moment in a large concert hall don't always transfer

comfortably to disc. Certainly there's little of the tender, confiding intimacy and quiet glow that Chung found with Lupu all those years ago, and while the makeweights – four belle époque miniatures, played with genuine affection – are altogether more loveable, this disc will primarily be of interest to fans of Kyung Wha Chung, rather than of Fauré or Franck.

**Richard Bratby**

*Franck Sonata – selected comparison:*

*Chung, Lupu (9/80<sup>8</sup>, 1/89) (DECC) 421 154-2DH*

## Hahn

'Chamber Music & Song, Vol 1'

Piano Quartet No 3<sup>a</sup>. Piano Quintet<sup>b</sup>. A Chloris<sup>c</sup>.

Nocturne<sup>d</sup>. Si mes vers avaient des ailes<sup>e</sup>.

Vocalise-Étude<sup>f</sup>

<sup>abc</sup>Benjamin Baker, <sup>bd</sup>Bartosz Woroch <sup>vns</sup> <sup>abf</sup>Adam

Newman <sup>va</sup> <sup>abe</sup>Tim Lowe <sup>vc</sup> James Baillieu <sup>pf</sup>

Champs Hill © CHRC139 (71' • DDD)



Too little attention has been paid to Reynaldo Hahn's chamber music of

late, so this beautiful CD, marking the start of what promises to be a major reappraisal, is an important addition to his discography. The series is the brainchild of James

Baillieu, who was so struck by audience enthusiasm for Hahn's work during his French chamber music concerts at the 2013 Brighton Festival that he decided to explore it further and more extensively on disc.

The programme for the first volume flanks short pieces and song transcriptions with the G major Piano Quartet, completed in 1946, a year before Hahn's death, and his only piano quintet, dating from 1921. The latter, closely wrought and at times strikingly intense, reveals a debt to Franck in its use of cyclic form. The influence of Fauré, whom Hahn deeply admired, can be felt in the quartet, which is bittersweet and autumnal in mood. Both works have remarkable slow movements, which form the emotional fulcrums round which they swing: in the quintet, penumbral string harmonies shift uneasily over measured piano chords and figurations; the quartet's *Andante* is a barcarolle which unwinds with nostalgic sensuality as time itself, as Baillieu comments in a booklet note, almost seems to stand still.

Both works are beautifully done. Some of Baillieu's string players took part in the Brighton performances and there's a strong sense of ensemble here, with an instinctive give and take between its members and a

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real feel for both the music's elegance and poise and the altogether darker emotions that lurk beneath its surface. The shorter pieces give each string player a solo in turn. Bartosz Woroch's lyrical refinement in the E flat violin Nocturne contrasts with the grander sweep of Tim Lowe's performance of Hahn's own cello arrangement of 'Si mes vers avaient des ailes'. Viola player Adam Newman sounds good in the *Vocalise-Étude*, with its orientalist flourishes that reveal a familiarity with Rimsky's *Sheherazade*. I'm not entirely convinced, though, that 'À Chloris' works in transcription, since the melodic line, guided by rhetorical flourishes within the text, is apt to lose its way without the words. That's no reflection, however, on the grace of Benjamin Baker's playing or Baillieu's treatment of the accompaniment, which is exquisite. **Tim Ashley**

## Haydn

Piano Trios, HobXV - No 14;

No 18; No 21; No 26; No 31

**Trio Wanderer**

Harmonia Mundi © HMM90 2321 (69' • DDD)



Five Haydn piano trios trace a passage from light to darkness – well, almost. The

Trio Wanderer open with the serious (and seriously underrated) A flat major (No 14) and finish up with two of the most profound of all these works, those in F sharp major and E flat minor (Nos 26 and 31), in between skipping through the highest of Haydn's jinks in the A and C major Trios (Nos 18 and 21).

These are beautifully played performances, set in a generous enough acoustic (the Teldex Studio in Berlin) to give each instrument full voice: the pizzicato accompaniment to the piano's cantilena in No 14, for example, is pleasingly plump. There is enough clarity around each instrument to make every line audible, which hasn't necessarily been the case in the Wanderer's previous recordings of Romantic music, although the sparer textures of the Classical trio style help greatly in this respect.

Favourite moments: the whipcrack finales of the two 'lighter' works (Nos 18 and 21), played with a natural élan that can't fail to raise a smile. Also the *cantabile* piano line in the central slow movement of No 26 – adapted either from or into the *Adagio* of Symphony No 102, where the melody is tellingly transferred to the cello – played here with an ecstatic freedom of pulse by

Vincent Coq. The disc closes on a hopeful note, with the 'Jacob's Dream' *Allegro* of the bipartite E flat minor forming the ideal foil to the austerity of its opening movement.

This is the Wanderer's return to Haydn on disc after a gap of a decade and a half. The late Duncan Druce remarked of their first Haydn disc (Harmonia Mundi, 5/02) that 'it's a treat to hear Haydn trios played with such care for their sound and texture'. The same holds true today; and please, let's not be made to wait until 2034 for the third volume! **David Thresher**

## Myaskovsky · Prokofiev · Taneyev

**Myaskovsky Cello Sonatas - No 1, Op 12;**

**No 2, Op 81 Prokofiev Ballade, Op 15**

**Taneyev Canzona**

**Pavel Gomziakov** vc **Andrei Korobeinikov** pf

Onyx © ONYX4176 (61' • DDD)



If ever you needed proof of how utterly tone-deaf were the Soviet Union's post-war denunciations of musical 'formalism', you couldn't do much better than Nikolay Myaskovsky's Second Cello Sonata: a work composed in 1948 but marginally less challenging, both stylistically and in emotional range, than his First, written in 1911. And it's none the worse for it. This is merely by way of saying that while Myaskovsky's music certainly can be bold, uninhibited and outspoken, his cello sonatas don't spring many surprises.

Still, for much of the time Pavel Gomziakov and the pianist Andrei Korobeinikov positively wallow in them. Gomziakov can certainly spin a lyrical line, and the tone of his C string is a thing of bottomless, velvet-black depth, booming sonorously out over the slightly brittle sound of Korobeinikov's piano. Climaxes are huge, thunderous cloudbursts; and the massive opening chord of Prokofiev's Ballade (1912), coming after the subdued ending of Myaskovsky's First Sonata, is practically apocalyptic. But there's a downside to all this grandeur and, quite apart from the fact that an over-resonant acoustic muddles a lot of the busier music, Gomziakov's sound in the upper registers is relatively constricted.

That actually helps clarify matters in the more lightly written Second Sonata (it was originally conceived for viola d'amore), but clarity doesn't bring any greater sense of urgency. While it never sounds less than pleasant, it's all rather discursive: you miss Laura van der Heijden's sense of direction,

of phrases being shaped to a purpose. Even the finale, which Gomziakov and Korobeinikov take at a dashing pace, is slightly smudged. Taneyev's Canzona – unconvincingly transcribed from a clarinet piece – is nice to have; but really, this is a disc for Myaskovsky completists.

**Richard Bratby**

*Myaskovsky Cello Sonata No 2 – selected comparison:*

*Van der Heijden, Limonov (2/18) (CHAM) CHRC136*

## Nyman

'Chamber Music, Vol 3'

String Quartets - No 5, 'Let's not make a song and dance out of this'; No 4

**The Smith Quartet**

MN Records © MNRC141 (65' • DDD)



Sixteen years separate Nyman's String Quartets Nos 4 and 5 – quite a hiatus

when you consider that Nos 1-4 were written within the space of 10 years. Maybe Nyman felt that he had covered all areas after completing the ambitious, large-scale String Quartet No 4 (1994-95). Clocking in at over 40 minutes and divided into 12 movements, this significant work in the composer's oeuvre is a virtuoso tour de force for the quartet in general, especially the first violin. The latter's part is actually transplanted into the quartet *in toto* from another work, *Yamamoto perpetuo* for solo violin, composed some two years previously.

This process of musical appropriation – imagine Bach adding several instrumental lines to one of his solo violin partitas in order to turn it into a concerto – provides the quartet with an almost symphonic breadth and richness. The remaining three string lines sometimes support, reinforce, extend or expand on the first violin's lines. Elsewhere, such as during the very opening movement, completely new layers are added that are not directly related to the original *Yamamoto* material, taking the music in a very different direction.

In comparison with the Camilli Quartet's excellent earlier recording of the Fourth on 'The Suit and the Photograph', The Smith Quartet opt for a tighter, more focused sound, resulting in a direct and very dynamic performance overall. A similar approach is adopted for the Fifth Quartet, too, which unlike the previous four does not draw on pre-existing material. Plenty of Nyman traits rise to the surface, however. Subtitled *Let's not make a song and dance about this*, exuberant dancelike patterns animate the first and fifth





Pianist James Baillieu and friends are persuasive advocates for the chamber music of Reynaldo Hahn

movements, while the lyrical, songlike second and fifth hint at the 'Franklyn' theme from the composer's bittersweet soundtrack to Michael Winterbottom's 1999 film *Wonderland*. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

*String Quartet No 4 – comparative version:*  
*Camilli Qt (8/98)* (EMI/WARN) ➔ 084751-2

## Schubert

'Aus der Ferne'

String Quartets - No 8, D112; No 15, 'Rosamunde', D804. Du bist die Ruh, D776<sup>a</sup>. Die Götter Griechenlands, D677<sup>a</sup>. Lachen und Weinen, D777<sup>a</sup>. Lied aus der Ferne, D107<sup>a</sup>. Rosamunde, D797 - Hirtenmelodien<sup>a</sup>. Wanders Nachtlied, D768<sup>a</sup> (<sup>a</sup>arr Xandi van Dijk)

**Signum Quartet**

Pentatone Ⓢ PTC5186 673 (80' • DDD/DSD)



'Sit back and enjoy' urges the booklet and it really would be a pity not to listen right through. A string quartet transcription of Schubert's early song 'Lied aus der Ferne' begins the journey with a gentle push; and with a softly glinting version of 'Du bist die Ruh' it recedes into the twilight. In between come four more transcriptions of Schubert songs and refined, searching accounts of two

full-length quartets: the youthful D112 and the rather more familiar A minor, D804.

The idea, according to Xandi van Dijk (the Signum Quartet's viola player and arranger, though nowhere, bizarrely, are the names of any of the other members given), is to 'show how Schubert's instrumental and vocal music cross-pollinate each other' and while I'm instinctively sceptical about instrumental transcriptions of vocal works, I was persuaded by how well they work here, and the subtlety and intelligence of the performances. It would have been obvious to put the transcription of 'Die Götter Griechenlands' directly before the A minor quartet, which quotes it directly. But how much more evocative, and revealing, to have the quartet's restless opening phrases follow from the deep stillness at the end of 'Wanders Nachtlied'.

And in this context, the two quartets emerge all the more powerfully as the original, idiomatic masterpieces they are. The quartet play transparently and eloquently, without a hint of sentimentality, in performances that deal unflinchingly with the music's latent violence. The slow movement of the A minor Quartet, in particular, veers terrifyingly into the darkness, and D112 emerges as a work of unexpected boldness and depth. The

recorded sound is atmospheric and crystal clear. Definitely not Schubert as easy-listening, then, but a fascinating, thought-provoking disc. **Richard Bratby**

## Schubert • Brahms

**Brahms Piano Quintet, Op 34**

**Schubert Piano Quintet, 'Trout', D667**

**Christoph Soldan pf Silesian Chamber Soloists**  
**Dux** Ⓢ DUX1426 (77' • DDD)

## Schubert

Piano Quintet, 'Trout', D667<sup>a</sup>. Fantasie, D934

**Guillaume Chillemme vn <sup>a</sup>Marie Chillemme va**

**<sup>a</sup>Astrig Siranossian vc <sup>a</sup>Émilie Legrand db**

**Nathanaël Gouin pf**

Evidence Ⓢ EVCD046 (63' • DDD)



Two *Trouts*, one frolicking in the Oder, the other freezing in an Alpine stream in the skiing region around Chamonix. Two markedly different interpretations, too, the Silesians performing the *Trout* as small-scale symphony, the French ensemble offering chamber music writ small, as if performing in their own private Schubertiade.



# LUCILE RICHARDOT SÉBASTIEN DAUCÉ ENSEMBLE CORRESPONDANCES

## PERPETUAL NIGHT 17TH CENTURY AYRES AND SONGS

The circulation of artists and sovereigns between France and England in the seventeenth century resulted in the establishment of highly original genres in the latter country: the first recitatives, large-scale airs from masques and dramatic 'scenes' provided fertile ground for experimentation and prepared the way for the birth of semi-opera. Sébastien Daucé explores this English vocal art in a programme tailor-made for one of today's most fascinating voices: Lucile Richardot, in the exquisite setting provided by Correspondances, subtly blends music, love, night and melancholy.



**LONDON BAROQUE FESTIVAL,  
2 CONCERTS ON MAY 17TH AND 19TH**

Photo © IGOR Studio

HMM 902269





Tremulous beauty: Chloë Hanslip and Danny Driver continue their live survey of Beethoven's violin sonatas – see review on page 51

The Silesians' sound is built on the firm foundation of Krzysztof Korzeń's satisfyingly cavernous bass, and the microphones are trained on the strings, leaving the piano sounding a little distant, sometimes phasing in and out of the sound picture. The ear soon adjusts, nevertheless, and the imaginative yet natural phrasing employed by these players makes this a particularly fine reading. There's a special Viennese lilt to the closing minutes of the variations and a gambolling simplicity to the rustic finale that demonstrate the intelligence and affection with which this group play the work.

Where the Silesians play to the back of the hall, the French ensemble adopt a more intimate approach. The quality of the interplay between them is admirable but, in playing to each other rather than to the back rows, the effect is one of reticence, almost of self-effacement. They are also a notch slower than the Silesians almost everywhere. The contrast is heightened when listening to the two recordings in close succession; both approaches are valid and both bring rewards but, for this listener at least, the Silesians are the more communicative, carrying you along in the irresistible joy of Schubert's effusion of melody.

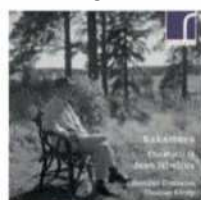
The Silesians turn off the sunshine for their coupling of Brahms's Piano Quintet, revelling in the intensity of Brahms's full-

throated *Sturm und Drang*. The French group shed three players, leaving just Guillaume Chilleme and Nathanaël Gouin to play the late *Fantasie* for violin and piano; the microphones move in to capture the detail they mine from this miniature masterpiece, Chilleme's tone sweet with a touch of graininess.

Both discs have much to say in this music and both *Trouts* (pleasingly given as 'Pstrąg' on the Polish disc) are finer than the recent Mutter/Trifonov (DG, 12/17), which mistook speed for affection and rather tripped itself up too often for pleasurable listening. But a big fish or a little fish? The choice is yours. **David Threasher**

## Sibelius

*Andante festivo*<sup>a</sup>. Nocturne (arr John Amans)<sup>b</sup>. Impromptu<sup>a</sup>. Six Impromptus, Op 5<sup>c</sup>. Malinconia, Op 20<sup>d</sup>. The Oak-tree, Op 109 No 2 (arr Jussi Jalas)<sup>b</sup>. Rakastava, Op 14<sup>a</sup>. Romance, Op 42<sup>a</sup>. Scaramouche – Flute Solo (arr Jussi Jalas)<sup>b</sup>  
<sup>a</sup>Sami Junnonen fl <sup>d</sup>Adrian Bradbury vc <sup>bcd</sup>Sophia Rahman pf <sup>a</sup>Chamber Domaine / Thomas Kemp  
 Resonus © RES10205 (63' • DDD)



Sibelius as proto-minimalist – well, why not? That's what the conductor Thomas

Kemp suggests in his booklet notes, and his performances of a series of Sibelius's short works for string orchestra with his ensemble Chamber Domaine might perhaps bring Arvo Pärt to mind. It's not just the cool, spacious recorded sound (some pieces – it's not specified which – were recorded in the chapel of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, and some in a church in Kent), or even the way Kemp clarifies and layers Sibelius's string sound. It's the way he shapes and places each phrase, letting it find its own space. To risk another comparison, *Rakastava*, the Impromptu and the Romance, Op 42, are presented almost like Brancusi sculptures – endlessly fascinating sonic artefacts, to be contemplated from all sides.

The playing is highly refined, and quiet dynamics are often extremely quiet. If this all sounds like a slightly chilly approach to Sibelius, the temperature rises in the Six Impromptus for solo piano, played by Sophia Rahman with a vivid, glinting sense of light and shade, and *Malinconia*, in which she's joined by cellist Adrian Bradbury for a performance whose eventual emotional release is all the more effective coming on the heels of such restraint. There are minimalist pre-echoes, too, in the three transcriptions for flute and piano (it would have been interesting to know more about the provenance of the arrangements), but

# GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

## SOUND THE TRUMPETS

**Guy Rickards** salutes a plethora of discs for brass, including original works and arrangements, from fanfares to jazz



58 tracks in 59 minutes: Onyx Brass and guest musicians recording a surprisingly varied disc of fanfares

The horn may have primacy within the orchestral brass section but when it comes to smaller brass ensembles the trumpet is dominant. There is an analogy here with the strings, the trumpet occupying the position of the violin – also the most numerous instrument – and the horn the viola, with the bass parts divided between trombone and/or tuba. Even in a brass band, the trumpet's cousin the cornet dominates the musical foreground.

Fanfares are the staple of the trumpet's repertoire, whether in orchestral canvases – Dukas's *La pèri* or Brian's Seventh Symphony spring to mind – or short works like Arthur Bliss's once-ubiquitous *Fanfare for a Dignified Occasion* (1938). This, plus 11 more (Bliss was undeniably a master of the form) feature on a superb disc from **Onyx Brass**. Some may balk at a 59-minute programme of 58 tracks by 14 composers but it proves highly diverting, not unlike RCA's groundbreaking 'Jubilant Fanfares' (6/77), which also featured Bliss's fanfares *For a Dignified Occasion*, *For Heroes* (1930) and *Homage to Shakespeare* (1973). What astonishes most is the range of mood and form composers can wring from this simplest of concepts; Bliss's formality

(echoed by Howells, Arnold, Tippett, Bantock, Eric Coates, Haydn Wood, Ketèlby, Harty, Curzon and Bax) is offset by freer examples by Lutyens (*Fanfare for a Festival*, 1975), for the generic ensemble of three trumpets and three trombones, or Imogen Holst's *Fanfare for Thaxted* (1966), for the unusual combination of flute, two trumpets and bells; her five-movement *Leiston Suite* (1967) encapsulates in six splendid minutes the versatility of the format.

Onyx Brass also feature on a brand-new issue of jazz-based pieces from NMC that also marks the core quintet's 25th anniversary. The programme has one foot (at some points, two) in jazz, with many of the composers moving between jazz and classical music. There is little cutting-edge in these works with most, but thankfully not all, squarely middle-of-the-road. Gwilym Simcock's *Stomper* sets the tone at the outset, if it is a tad overlong. There are some attractive scores among them: Trish Clowes's part-improvisatory *The Mighty Pencil* (2015, dedicated to the victims of the *Charlie Hebdo* shooting), Jason Rebello's *Inevitable Outcome* and David Powell's substantial if discursive *Symbols at your Door*. Laurence Cottle's *Holy Chalcedony* (a pun on the quintet's

name) plays with a gospel-like melody, while Kenny Wheeler's diptych *1 for 5* reworks two of his own tunes. Few match the lyricism of Mark Nightingale's *For Rosie* or Mike Walker's almost Coplandesque *Let Her Go*. The pick of the tracks are Liam Noble's *Imaginary Dance* (one of the more harmonically adventurous pieces), Guy Barker's title-track, *Onyx Noir*, and the wonderful evocation of an early steam engine that opens Colin Skinner's suite *Firebox*. Terrific sound and playing.

The trumpet is the focus of Crystal Records' new album by the trumpeter **Anthony Plog**. A virtuoso player, Plog is a composer as well, represented by a brief *Fanfare* for two trumpets and *Animal Ditties*, a witty mini-suite for narrator (Hal Smith), trumpet and piano on poems by Ogden Nash. Plog's recital is remarkably wide-ranging, opening with *Music for Five Trumpets* by Verne Reynolds played with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Trumpets and closing with the imaginative *Three Spheres* for trumpet, bassoon and piano by Leroy Southers. In between come three works for trumpet and piano – played impeccably by Sharon Davis – by Fisher Tull (*Three Bagatelles*), Bozza's kaleidoscopically varied *Caprice* and Enescu's *Légende*. As points of familiarity, Enescu's and Bozza's works allow one to gauge Plog's undeniable musicianship but it is the sheer diversity that is the winning feature of the disc, as in Frank Campo's *Duet for Equal Trumpets*. Crystal's sound is variable (details of locations and dates are not provided) but my main quibble is that just the first movement of Hovhanness's ethereal *Sonata* for trumpet and organ, Op 200, is included; there was room for the whole.

Quintets are a common brass grouping and the repertoire is extensive, although arrangements form a major greater segment, as can be heard on Seraph Brass's disc *Asteria* (ironically titled from a work composed specially for them). Jeff Luke's reworkings of Mendelssohn's Scherzo from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Grieg's *Holberg Suite* (with Thomas Oltarzewski), Albéniz's *Suite española* No 1 and Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsody* No 2 provide plenty of scope for virtuosity. Seraph's strength is in their ensemble-playing although at times in Mendelssohn's Scherzo they sound a touch ragged; things are much securer in the *Holberg Suite*, a very satisfying arrangement well blown here, as also in the Albéniz and Liszt. The new pieces also elicit some fine playing, particularly in the





titular work, *Asteria*, an astronomical trilogy by Catherine McMichael taking its character from the mythological figures that inspired the naming of the tiny dots in the sky: Andromeda, Virgo and, inevitably perhaps, the Pleiades. It is a nicely worked suite; but more compelling still is Rene Orth's tone poem *Leaguered in Fire, Lagooned in Gold*, derived from Edith Wharton's poem 'An Autumn Sunset'. Anthony DiLorenzo's *Go*, a brief, vibrant toccata, completes the programme.

Of more consistent musical weight and style is **Woven Brass**, an hour-long cycle created 'over a period of a decade and a half' by the Norwegian composer Bjørn Morten Christophersen. The 14 pieces are remarkably varied in character and idiom unified by thematic cross-references. *The Wind Blows Where It Desires* (2013) is an intriguing piece of nature painting scored for just three trumpets, running to 9'35", whereas seven pieces last two minutes or less. Midway, *Circo Dodecafonico* offers a compact cerebral discourse at the other extreme expressively to its serener partner, *Octatonic Song*. The cycle concludes with another pair of contrasted movements, Chaconne for solo trumpet, played with jaw-dropping control by Jonas Haltia, and *Woven Brass Quintet* (2017) where the 'various strands are – perhaps – finally brought together'. If 'Woven Brass' lacks anything, it is a truly standout movement to capture the imagination, but the cycle is a gripping listen nonetheless. **G**

## THE RECORDINGS



**Fanfares**  
Onyx Brass  
Chandos (CD) CHSA5221



**Onyx Noir**  
Onyx Brass  
NMC (CD) NMCD237



**Various Cpsrs** Wks with Tpt  
Anthony Plog et al  
Crystal Records (CD) CD362



**Asteria**  
Seraph Brass  
Summit (CD) DCD709



**Christophersen** Woven Brass  
Oslo Philh Brass  
2L (CD + Blu-ray) 2L143SABD

flautist Sami Junnonen has a full, expressive sound and makes an eloquent tonal contrast between the gloom of *The Oak-tree* and the limpid brightness of *Scaramouche*.

A dignified account of the *Andante festivo* concludes a disc that, if it prioritises head over heart, unquestionably has something distinctive to say. **Richard Bratby**

## Mathias Kjøller

**Berg** Four Pieces, Op 5<sup>a</sup>. Adagio<sup>b</sup> **Corigliano**

Soliloquy<sup>c</sup> **Debussy** Première Rhapsodie<sup>a</sup>

**Reinecke** Introduction and Allegro

appassionato, Op 256<sup>a</sup> **Schumann** Three Romances, Op 94<sup>a</sup>

**Mathias Kjøller** cl<sup>b</sup> **Chloë Hanslip** vn

<sup>ab</sup> **Simon Crawford-Phillips** pf<sup>c</sup> **Callino Quartet**  
Orchid (CD) ORC100077 (58' • DDD)



Principal clarinet for both the Aarhus and Danish National Symphony orchestras,

Mathias Kjøller (b1985) is a soloist in demand, especially after coming second in the 2013 Carl Nielsen Clarinet Competition. A fine, lyrical player with a beautiful tone, Kjøller's sensitive performance of the Schumann *Romances* sets out his stall. I can see why these open the disc, beguiling the ear with an immaculately manicured rendition (in which accompanist Simon Crawford-Phillips plays no small part). Reinecke's *Introduction and Allegro appassionato* (c1900) may date from half a century after Schumann but stylistically lies well within its orbit. The subtleties and larger span of Debussy's *Première Rhapsodie* (1910), however, show how acute Kjøller's sense of structure is, a feature vital to his accounts of the last of Berg's Four Pieces, Op 5 (1913) and the *Adagio*, recast in 1935 from the Chamber Concerto.

Kjøller is alive to the poetry in Debussy's *Rhapsodie* as much as in Berg's miniature Pieces and the *Adagio* (the largest track on the disc), where he is joined by a regular chamber music partner of his, the violinist Chloë Hanslip. Their understanding is palpable in a beautifully phrased account. Corigliano's *Soliloquy* (1995) is also a chamber arrangement from a larger work, the 'Elegy' from the Clarinet Concerto (1977). Kjøller's partnership with the Callino Quartet – presumably forged at the West Cork Chamber Music Festival which they attend regularly – pays dividends in a sensitive interpretation. Orchid's sound is equally finely engineered, indeed a model for chamber music recording. **Guy Rickards**

## '1700'

**Caldara** La morte di Abel – Sinfonia **Durante** Concerto a quattro in G minor **Galuppi** Concerto a quattro in G minor **Geminiani** Concerto grosso, Op 3 No 3 **Locatelli** Sinfonia funebre **Mascitti** Concerto, Op 7 No 2 **Pugnani** Sinfonia in E flat – Adagio **Vivaldi** Concerto, Op 12 No 3 RV124

**Concerto Italiano** / **Rinaldo Alessandrini**

Naïve (CD) OP30568 (65' • DDD)



Arcangelo Corelli is the (unheard) presiding genius behind this sequel to

Rinaldo Alessandrini's chronological survey of 17th-century Italian string music (6/12). The Roman master's influence is audible in works ranging from a concerto by the Paris-based Michele Mascitti – Corelli with an added touch of Gallic chic – via a gravely impressive sinfonia by Caldara, to a Galuppi *concerto a quattro* that stands on the cusp of a new age. Here and elsewhere, Corelli's trademark dignity and sobriety often receive a more extrovert, dramatic twist, in keeping with changing tastes. A G minor concerto by Francesco Durante combines tortuously chromatic fugal writing with violin fireworks, while the rhythmic and contrapuntal energy of a concerto by Corelli's pupil Geminiani reminds us that he was an exact contemporary of Handel in London.

Playing these assorted concertos and *sinfonie* one-to-a-part (plenty of 18th-century precedent here), Alessandrini and his crack players marry elegance with unfailing rhythmic zest, always attentive to textural clarity and the shaping of bass lines. The continuo (harpsichord and/or theorbo) adds impetus without ever becoming irritatingly obtrusive. Alessandrini and his band bring a devil-may-care exuberance to a Vivaldi ripieno concerto – one of the few works here with no Corellian pedigree – and a vividly gestural, quasi-operatic manner to a *sinfonia funebre* which may or may not be by Locatelli (though the final minuet is arguably too breezy for music marked 'La consolazione'). The players are invariably sensitive to harmonic flux, not least in a darkly brooding sinfonia by Gaetano Pugnani that sounds like Corelli updated for the Classical age. A word, too, for violinist Boris Begelman's mingled brilliance and grace in the Durante concerto. In an enterprisingly chosen repertoire, Concerto Italiano are here at their exhilarating, imaginative best.

**Richard Wigmore**

# Pierre Cochereau

Andrew Mellor pays tribute to the extraordinary French organist with a gift for improvisation who is credited for having brought to the world the characteristic sound of the French organ

Over the course of the bizarre but charming 1974 film *L'étrange ballade de Quasimodo*, Francis Perrin adopts the form of the infamous hunchback. He drags his distorted frame around the darkest corners of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, meeting the real-life characters employed therein.

By lamplight, Perrin approaches the organ loft with trepidation. There, he finds Pierre Cochereau improvising characteristically on the cathedral's Cavaillé-Coll (the scene is on YouTube). Politically correct before his time – which is more than can be said of the film itself – Cochereau invites the unfortunate soul to join him on the organ bench. Addressing his new friend as an equal, he begins to espouse on the practicality of the console's newly electrified action.

For some, Cochereau (1924–84) himself was villain enough – his presiding over general alterations to the Notre-Dame organ from 1955 to 1972 nothing short of vandalism (the film shows Cochereau sitting at the Anglo-American-style console with which he'd replaced that in Aristide Cavaillé-Coll's distinctive 'dressing table' design). For others, Cochereau was the man who restored Notre-Dame to its rightful place as the undisputed grand fromage of French church music following years in the doldrums after the death of Louis Vierne in 1937.

Given the following that Cochereau garnered at Notre-Dame and beyond, it is hard to dispute the latter view. That short piece of film illustrates the organist's extraordinary talents as a player – its little snatches of improvisation are recognisably his own even from their introductory rumbles – as well as his generosity of spirit as an evangelist for the organ and

for the spiritual value of music. Anthony Hammond, whose biography of Cochereau was published in 2012, describes his subject as 'one of the greatest ambassadors for the organ that the world has ever seen'.

Cochereau was born in Saint-Mandé just outside Paris in 1924 and soon came to the attention of the capital's most distinguished church musicians. He graduated from the Paris Conservatoire having experienced Duruflé's harmony class (in which he won the *premier prix*) and Marcel Dupré's organ class (Dupré described his pupil as 'a phenomenon without equal

in the history of the contemporary organ'). Before he'd even crossed the conservatoire's threshold, Cochereau had become organist at the church of St Roch, Paris. In 1945, three years after that unofficial appointment, he became *titulaire* at the church. A decade later he assumed the same post at Notre-Dame, one that came with the honorary position Organist of the Republic.

Thus began an illustrious career. As well as directing the conservatoires of Le Mans, Nice and Lyon (revitalising and reorganising many aspects of musical education in France), Cochereau slipped into a busy career as a recitalist which would see him travel from South America to Lebanon in the delivery of some 2000 performances. With those recitals, and some 80 plus recordings, he is credited with having brought the characteristic sound of the French organ school to the world.

That sound was inextricably connected to Cochereau's gift for improvisation, itself bound up in the distinctive voicing of the organs he played – particularly the thick reeds and heavy breathing of instruments built by Cavaillé-Coll. Numerous Cochereau improvisations

*His reconciling of the French romantic organ sound with the pillars of Bach's organ repertory is magnificent*

## DEFINING MOMENTS

### • 1929 – *Introduction to the keyboard*

After having had violin lessons, begins learning the piano with Marius-François Gaillard. From 1933 Marguerite Long was his teacher, followed by Paul Pannessay from 1936

### • 1938 – *Introduction to the organ*

Introduced to the organ by Marcel Dupré's pupil Marie-Louise Girod, who becomes an early mentor

### • 1955 – *Notre-Dame appointment*

Succeeds Léonce de Saint-Martin as *organiste titulaire* at Notre-Dame Cathedral, Paris. Until 1972, presides over alterations to the organ there, including the recomposition of mixture stops, the replacement of the old 'Barker-lever' action and the addition of *en chamade* trumpets

### • 1956 – *Recordings and first US tour*

L'Oiseau-Lyre starts releasing a series of recordings. His 1955 account of Dupré's *Symphonie-Passion* is awarded the Grand Prix of the Académie du Disque Français. Makes the first of more than 20 recital tours to the US, recording on the organ at Symphony Hall, Boston

### • 1967 – *A Moscow first*

Becomes the first Western organist to perform behind the Iron Curtain with a recital in Moscow

### • 1968 – *Honoured*

Is made a Chevalier of the Légion d'honneur (upgraded to an 'Officier' 10 years later)

### • 1970 – *Fulfils a duty as Organist of the Republic*

Plays at the funeral of Charles de Gaulle





were transcribed by other organists but it's difficult to see the results as anything more than flawed attempts to capture something born in the moment, both musically and liturgically. Cochereau described improvising as 'an illusionist's art'. Plenty of recordings exist of him demonstrating with his own hands and feet why that might be (the permanent recording equipment he installed at Notre-Dame saw to that).

Cochereau's reputation as a conduit of other composers' texts is distinguished in its division. His recordings of Couperin's organ Masses, agonisingly slow and prudishly shy of rhythmic zest, have not fared well. But his reconciling of the French romantic organ sound with the pillars of Bach's organ repertory is magnificent, the lightness of touch as remarkable as the boldness and breadth of the chosen registrations.

Cochereau's penchant for the gothic gesture – evocative yet sometimes overpowering,

but always such a perfect fit for Notre-Dame's instrument and acoustic – has not always been welcomed in these pages. Patrick Russill described his 1975-76 *Solstice* recordings of organ symphonies by Vierne as 'traded by vulgarity and indulgence' (2/96), and Cochereau's bold cameo in Karajan's 1981 recording of the Saint-Saëns *Organ Symphony* has twice had a black mark put against it by *Gramophone* (10/82, 3/83). Elsewhere, he has graced Critics' Choice pages and been singled out for his unerring individuality and character.

Cochereau's distinctive sound was best suited to his own,

in-the-moment creations which themselves spoke of the French organ tradition's links to Catholic ritual, the fairground and the cinema. When that sound did align itself successfully with standard repertory, it was remarkable in its imposition and power – highly articulate, instantly recognisable and unmistakably French. **G**

#### THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING



**Cochereau: 25 Improvisations sur l'Evangile selon saint Matthieu**

Pierre Cochereau *org*

*Solstice*

Recorded at Notre-Dame, Paris, between February 5 and March 4, 1984. He died two days later, on March 6.

# Instrumental



## David Fanning is dazzled by Argerich and Babayan in Prokofiev:

*'The love music at the heart of "Romeo and Juliet before Departure" is about as tender as a Red Square military parade'* ► [REVIEW ON PAGE 65](#)



## Pwyll ap Siôn welcomes Clare Hammond's disc of Robert Saxton:

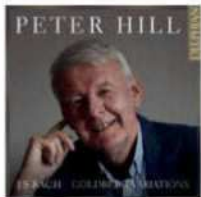
*'The set opens with dense and resonant textures dredged from the murky depths of the piano's low range'* ► [REVIEW ON PAGE 67](#)

## JS Bach

Goldberg Variations, BWV988

Peter Hill *pf*

Delphian © DCD34200 (79' • DDD)



Given the assertive profile distinguishing Peter Hill's 20th-century music

interpretations (Messiaen, Stravinsky, the Second Viennese School), his recordings of Bach's *French Suites* (3/16) and the complete *Well-Tempered Clavier* (6/12) are relatively understated and intimately scaled to the point of blandness. Ditto his *Goldberg Variations*. Hill contains dynamics within a *mezzo-forte/mezzo-piano* comfort zone, while a soft edge prevails throughout the pianist's contrapuntal contouring. His command of the cross-handed variations (originally deployed on two harpsichord manuals) betrays occasional unevenness, replete with increasingly thickened textures and progressively slowing tempos as the music unfolds, alarmingly so in Vars 21 and 23.

There are, to be certain, attractive details. Hill's soft staccato articulation in the Fughetta Var 10 couldn't be more centred. Some of the canon at the second's fluid bass lines take on attractive jazzy inflections, while subtle tonal shadings in Vars 13, 15, 21 and the celebrated 'Black Pearl' minor-key Var 25 compensate for the pianist's plain-spoken austerity. I also like the slight hesitancy of Hill's upward scales in Var 27 (the canon at the ninth), and the way he ignites Var 29's toccata-like patterns with just enough mobility and animation. However, Hill's undeniable musicality and sensitivity convey an overall reticence that does not communicate the music with the immediacy of Murray Perahia's incisively joyful pianism (Sony Classical, 12/00), Angela Hewitt's multi-level phrasing (Hyperion, 11/16), Lori Sims's lithe spontaneity (Two Pianists) or Alexandre Tharaud's ardent drama (Erato, 11/15).

In fact, I found Hill's extensive and perceptive booklet note essay on the *Goldbergs* more engaging than his actual piano interpretation. **Jed Distler**

## JS Bach

'The Complete Works for Keyboard, Vol 1 - The Young Heir (1699-1705)'

J Christoph Bach Prelude and Fugue in E flat<sup>a</sup>

**JM Bach** Chorale, 'Nun komm der Heiden Heiland'<sup>b</sup> **JS Bach** Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh darein, BWV741<sup>b</sup>. Alle Menschen müssen sterben, BWV1117<sup>c</sup>. Das alte Jahr vergangen ist, BWV1091<sup>c</sup>. Aria variata alla maniera italiana, BWV989<sup>a</sup>. Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir, BWV1099<sup>c</sup>. Capriccio, BWV993<sup>b</sup>. Capriccio sopra la lontananza del suo fratello dilettissimo, BWV992<sup>b</sup>. Christus, der ist mein Leben, BWV1112<sup>c</sup>. Ehre sei dir, Christe, der du leidest Not, BWV1097<sup>c</sup>. Fantasias - BWV570<sup>b</sup>; BWV571<sup>b</sup>; BWV1121<sup>a</sup>. Fantasia und Imitatio, BWV563<sup>a</sup>. Fuge über ein Thema von Tomaso Albinoni - BWV946<sup>b</sup>; BWV950<sup>a</sup>; BWV951a<sup>a</sup>. Fugues<sup>a</sup> - BWV947; BWV949. Gott, durch deine Güte, BWV724<sup>c</sup>. Herr Gott, nun schleuss den Himmel auf, BWV1092<sup>b</sup>. Herr Jesu Christ, du höchstes Gut, BWV1114<sup>b</sup>. Herzlich Lieb hab ich dich, o Herr, BWV1115<sup>c</sup>. Ich hab mein Sach Gott heimgestellt, BWV1113<sup>c</sup>. Jesu meine Freude, BWV1105<sup>c</sup>. Machs mit mir, Gott, nach deiner Güt, BWV957<sup>c</sup>. Nun lasst uns den Leib begraben, BWV1111<sup>c</sup>. O Jesu, wie ist dein Gestalt, BWV1094<sup>c</sup>. Partite diverse sopra 'Ach, was soll ich Sünder machen', BWV770<sup>b</sup>. Prelude and Partita, BWV833<sup>a</sup>. Preludes and Fugues - BWV531<sup>b</sup>; BWV533<sup>a</sup>; BWV535a<sup>b</sup>; BWV549a<sup>b</sup>; BWV551<sup>b</sup>; BWV896<sup>a</sup>. Sonatas<sup>a</sup> - BWV963; BWV967. Suite, BWV832<sup>a</sup>. Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her, BWV700<sup>c</sup>. Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan, BWV1116<sup>c</sup>. Werde munter, mein Gemüte, BWV1118<sup>c</sup>. Wie nach einer Wasserquelle, BWV1119<sup>c</sup> **G Böhm** Chorale, 'Vater unser im Himmelreich'<sup>b</sup>

**Frescobaldi** Bergamasca, F12:46<sup>a</sup> **Froberger** Canzona<sup>a</sup> **de Grigny** Point d'orgue sur les grands jeux<sup>b</sup> **Kuhnau** Suonata quarta, 'Hiskia agonizzante e risanato'<sup>a</sup> **Marchand** Suite in D minor<sup>a</sup> - Prélude; Sarabande; Chaconne **Pachelbel** Chorale, 'An Wasserflüssen Babylon'<sup>b</sup> **Benjamin Alard** <sup>a</sup>*hpd*/<sup>b</sup>*c**org* <sup>c</sup>*Gerlinde Sämann* *sop* Harmonia Mundi © ③ HMM90 2450/52 (4h 8' • DDD • T)

<sup>bc</sup>Played on the Silbermann organ of St Aurelia's Church, Strasbourg



The first instalment of Benjamin Alard's projected complete keyboard works of

JS Bach is entirely auspicious. Subtitled 'The Young Heir', this three-disc set includes works performed on the harpsichord and organ, dating from (roughly) 1699-1705, the young composer's childhood and apprentice years. The first CD includes works of musicians with whom Bach would have been familiar, among them members of his own extended musical family, including the greatest of his forebears, his great uncle Johann Christoph Bach, and his father-in-law, Johann Michael Bach. Also included are works by Frescobaldi, Froberger, Pachelbel, Marchand and de Grigny, along with Georg Böhm, whose work was particularly influential on the young Bach.

Alard is equally accomplished on both the organ and the harpsichord and moves from one to the other with facility. The organ is used not just for the early chorales but also, on the third disc, for the Capriccio on the departure of his brother, BWV992, an effective choice. The three discs are organised both chronologically and geographically, documenting the early peregrinations of the composer as he emerged from the musical milieu of his brother's town of Ohrdruf to his time in Lüneberg, where Böhm was a central figure, and his first professional posting in Arnstadt. Not surprisingly, the first two discs feel a bit scattered and unfocused, while the third reveals the composer coming into his own and contains the most substantial of the early works.

Alard's playing is a delight, clean and sensible, with striking agogic expressive power. On the early discs, his performances of works by Froberger and Kuhnau (a spare and melancholy little sonata) are even more striking than the





Benjamin Alard is equally accomplished on both the organ and the harpsichord in the first volume of the complete keyboard works of JS Bach

sometimes more workmanlike chorales and early fugues. But the third disc is full of evidence that the rest of this cycle will be a collection to be reckoned with, including fine renditions of the Suite in A major, BWV832, and the early, delightfully naive *Aria variata alla maniera italiana*, BWV989. Both the organ (from the Sainte-Aurélien church in Strasbourg, originally built in 1718) and the harpsichord (by Émile Jobin, based on a 1612 Ruckers and a 1747 Joannes Dulken instrument) are colourful and well suited to the repertoire. This is a project to watch with anticipation. **Philip Kennicott**

## Beethoven

'A Beethoven Odyssey, Vol 5'

Piano Sonatas - No 5, Op 10 No 1; No 6, Op 10 No 2; No 7, Op 10 No 3; No 10, Op 14 No 2

**James Brawn** *pf*

MSR Classics © MS1469 (71' • DDD)



As his Beethoven sonata cycle progresses, James Brawn's lean, dry-point style seems more comfortable in its own skin, with less fidgeting with details

and greater expressive economy. If anything, his scrupulous reading of Op 10 No 1's opening theme could have used a soupçon of fervency and abandon, but the lyrical second subject's finger legato and well-honed dynamic gradations compensate. Brawn's hauntingly sustained soft playing holds special interest in the *Adagio molto*, although his terse, businesslike embellishments and roulades need to sing out more. His fast finale approaches Beethoven's optimistic *Prestissimo* directive, yet never at the sacrifice of articulation and voicing.

The unusually bracing *alla breve* tempo with which Brawn begins Op 10 No 2 quickly settles into a conventional *allegro*. Still, the music's witty reserve comes across, notwithstanding a few instances where the left-hand rotary triplet figurations slow down a tad. The *Allegretto*'s cameo-like intimacy evokes memories of Wilhelm Kempff's wonderful mono and stereo DG interpretations, while the *Presto* finale's lightness and élan contrast with the more assertive rhythmic drive heard from Rudolf Serkin and Seymour Lipkin.

Op 10 No 3's bracing outer movements stand out for clarity and control within

Brawn's relatively constricted dynamic range. If Brawn doesn't plumb the great slow movement with the intensity of an Arrau or Schnabel, his pianism still displays sufficient freedom and flexibility. Again, Kempff's ghost hovers benignly over Brawn's gracefully clipped Menuetto.

My only half-quibble about Brawn's imaginative and poetic shaping of Op 14 No 2's *Allegro* concerns certain tapered phrases where the final notes virtually disappear. Listeners expecting a muted *Andante* may be taken aback by Brawn's brisk militancy, which, to my ears, lessens the stinging impact of Beethoven's syncopated accents. But the Scherzo finale captures Schnabel's angular, playful essence, albeit in a less genial, more buttoned-down, modern-day context. MSR's attractive close-up sonic perspective befits Brawn's conceptions. This is the finest release so far in Brawn's Beethoven cycle, and I look forward to the remaining instalments. **Jed Distler**

## Gulda

Für Paul. Für Rico. Play Piano Play, '10 Pieces for Yuko'. Prelude and Fugue. Sonatine. Variations on 'Light my fire'

**Martin David Jones** *pf*

Grand Piano © GP759 (74' • DDD)



Friedrich Gulda's jazz and pop persona didn't always sit well with critics and fans

who wished he'd simply focus on his 'day job' as a major-league interpreter of the Austro-German classics. Certainly Gulda wasn't a raving jazz/pop original, yet the compositions featured on this release attest to his affection and respect for these idioms, along with clever intelligence and humour.

The virtuoso momentum generated in Gulda's variations on The Doors' 'Light my fire' can easily overpower the theme's modest dimensions, yet pianist Martin David Jones resists the easy temptation to overbuild, interweaving the notated and improvised variations with unpressured unity. Of the 10 short pieces comprising *Play Piano Play*, Nos 1 and 5 could easily be mistaken for early-1950s Dave Brubeck, while slower movements like No 7 reveal Gulda's gift for fashioning heartfelt ballads tinged with the kind of melancholic passion associated with Michel Legrand.

Perhaps the 1965 Prelude and Fugue represents Gulda's most ambitious example of 'written-out jazz', although Jones's stiff articulation of the fugue's syncopated rhythms can't hold a candle to the swinging nonchalance of Marc-André Hamelin's recording (Hyperion, 6/08). On the other hand, Jones establishes a far more convincing 'groove' in the *Sonatine's* 'Shuffle' finale, whose modal harmonies Jones correctly likens to those in Miles Davis's 'So what'. The disc concludes with two short compositions respectively dedicated to Gulda's two sons. *Für Rico* evokes upbeat 1970s American television theme songs but the music loses something in translation via Jones's unidiomatic phrasing. Given his strong improvising in 'Light my fire', I was surprised by his less-than-inspired noodling midway through *Für Paul*, although he shapes the outer lyrical sections sensitively. His informative, well-written booklet notes shouldn't go unmentioned. **Jed Distler**

## Liszt

Piano Sonata, S178. Abschied, russisches Volkslied, S251. Bagatelle sans tonalité, S216a. Eine Faust-Symphonie, S513 – Gretchen. Im Traum, S207. Nuages gris, S199. Resignazione (Ergebung), S263/187a. Schlaflos! Frage und Antwort, S203. Toccata, S197a. Unstern! Sinistre, disastro, S208. Wiegenlied, S198

**Lucille Chung** pf  
Signum © SIGCD533 (72' • DDD)



Lucille Chung, the Canadian pianist whose previous recordings have included Scriabin,

Poulenc and Ligeti, has now turned to Liszt, with nine pieces from the last decade of the composer's life juxtaposed with two large-scale works of the 1850s.

The fleet Toccata, which could almost be a study for the *Csárdások* or the late *Mephisto Waltzes*, serves as an overture to the late group. Chung imbues *Unstern!* with genuine menace, all the more formidable for its pendulum-like rhythm, and follows it with a tender *Wiegenlied*, later expanded as the first movement of the last symphonic poem. *Bagatelle sans tonalité* glitters and shimmers in a performance that foregrounds prickly audacity. *Abschied*, *Nuages gris* and a surprisingly brisk *En rêve* aptly evoke the pathos and existential loneliness Liszt described with such economy in some of the late works. Taken as a whole, these carefully selected pieces would make a compelling group on a recital programme.

Chung's focus in the 'Gretchen' transcription is delineation of Liszt's rich polyphony, allowing the various instrumental voices to speak with perfect clarity. With some justification, she treats the work as a stand-alone, though some listeners may miss a stronger characterisation of the Faust allusions from the first movement of the symphony.

Given the more than 200 recordings of the B minor Sonata currently available, it's difficult to make an individual statement in the piece without veering into the realms of self-indulgent eccentricity. Yet Chung manages to do it, and with the sort of go-for-broke playing that one rarely encounters these days. Her sound is particularly impressive, along with a shapely and expressive singing line, as well as plenty of speed and power when called for. Chung's success with so many facets of Liszt whets the appetite for a set of *Transcendental Études*. **Patrick Rucker**

## Medtner

Piano Sonatas – 'Sonata-Skazka', Op 25 No 1; 'Night Wind', Op 25 No 2. Four Skazki, Op 26  
**Caspar Vos** pf

7 Mountain © 7MNTN011 (63' • DDD)



How refreshing to find a pianist choosing Medtner for his debut CD.

And this is clearly no casual decision, for the Dutch musician Caspar Vos talks in his notes about having started 'to fiddle ... with certain passages' in the epic *Night Wind* Sonata, Op 25 No 2, while still quite young. He adds that he feels a kinship with the composer's personality, and that certainly comes over in the pieces performed here, his Steinway warmly recorded.

Well, that fiddling paid off, for his *Night Wind* is quite something. It's a work that can be tricky to elucidate, consisting of two conjoined movements that unfold over a large time-span and where intensity is married to extreme virtuosity in places. Vos has a wide colour palette, which he reveals in the *Andante* introduction. He also – crucially – finds a clarity to the textures that helps guide the listener through the work. If he can't quite match Marc-André Hamelin in sheer characterisation, Vos still conveys the sense of surge and repose, mystery and exaltation that is such a hallmark of this composer.

In the other Op 25 work, the *Sonata-Skazka*, Vos brings out the first movement's changeability, positively relishing the staccato repeated-note figuration at 4'32". But in his attempt to bring out the abundant beauty of the *Andantino con moto*, he chooses a tempo that is simply unsustainable and toys with the melodic line to distraction. How much more effective is Hamelin, at a naturally flowing speed. The finale, happily, comes across much more convincingly, Vos capturing both the proudly strutting *Allegro* and its more inward moments.

In between we get the Op 26 *Skazki*, of which the *Molto vivace* second piece is a particular highlight, with Vos enjoying the delicacy of the high-lying writing. In the third he perhaps misses the simplicity that Hamish Milne conveys so innately, though here it's worth hearing Medtner himself – his 1936 recording finds a perfect balance of songful melody, contrasting with the *Più mosso* writing, while the composer's earlier account is freer, possibly too much so for modern ears. In the fourth piece, again it is Milne who finds a greater sense of inevitability, though Vos brings out its constantly changing moods with flair and clear affection. **Harriet Smith**

*Piano Sonatas – selected comparison:*

Hamelin (10/98) (HYPE) CDA67221/4

*Skazki – selected comparison:*

Milne (HYPE) CDA67491/2

*Skazki Nos 2 & 3 – selected comparisons:*

Medtner, r1931 (4/38<sup>th</sup>) (APR) APR5546

Medtner, r1936 (4/38<sup>th</sup>) (APR) APR5547





Caspar Vos makes a daring debut with Medtner's fearsome 'Night Wind' Sonata

## Prokofiev

'Prokofiev for Two'

Eugene Onegin, Op 71 - Mazurka and Polka. Hamlet, Op 77 - The Ghost of Hamlet's Father. Pushkin Waltz, Op 120 No 2. The Queen of Spades, Op 70 - Idée fixe; Polonaise. Romeo and Juliet, Op 64 - Twelve Movements. War and Peace - Natasha and Andrei's Valse (all transcr Babayan)

**Martha Argerich, Sergei Babayan** *pfs*  
DG © 479 9854GH (60' • DDD)



The *Romeo and Juliet* transcriptions here are no mere scaling-up of the Ten Pieces

Prokofiev himself produced for solo piano. In fact barely half of them refer to those reworkings. Most of the remainder are familiar from his orchestral suites, and virtually all come off so well in Sergei Babayan's two-piano arrangements that it is hard to imagine the composer being anything but delighted.

This is as much to do with the dash and verve of the performances – vividly recorded – as with the transcriptions themselves. The *Classical* Symphony-derived Gavotte is done with delicious

grace, and the various street scenes are thrown off with sparkling touch and vivid colours. The 'Quarrel', 'Folk Dance', 'Dance with Mandolins' and 'Death of Tybalt', all brilliantly played, would all make terrific encore pieces for any two-piano concert. Admittedly there are some over-the-top characterisations. The 'Dance of the Knights', for instance, sounds more like *Clash of the Titans*, and 'Juliet as a Young Girl' seems to have been taking performance enhancers. The love music at the heart of 'Romeo and Juliet before Departure' is about as tender as a Red Square military parade. But never mind. The dazzle factor in this pianistic display is its own justification.

The assorted dance movements that complete the disc are generally less flamboyant and therefore less immediately communicative, though the waltz from *War and Peace* is certainly imposing in its grandeur and the 'Idée fixe' from *The Queen of Spades* is appropriately eerie and obsessive. Presumably to have added any more movements from *Romeo and Juliet* would have upset the balance and coherence of the set as presented. But so vividly do Babayan's transcriptions leap off the page that I doubt if I would have raised any objection. **David Fanning**

## Prokofiev • Ravel

**Prokofiev** Piano Sonata No 4, Op 29.

Ten Pieces, Op 12. Toccata, Op 11

**Ravel** Le tombeau de Couperin

**Nathalia Milstein** *pf*

Mirare © MIR350 (74' • DDD)



Reviewing debut discs can be hazardous in the light of later

developments. The first *Gramophone* review of Argerich, for instance, now appears comically high-handed: 'When she realises that there's more to a *presto* than mere speed, more to double octaves than mere thunder, and more to music than keyboard effectiveness, I'm sure she will be quite a pianist.' Fortunately in the case of Nathalia Milstein, winner of the 2015 Dublin International Piano Competition, the path is partially cleared, thanks to glowing reviews of the violin-and-piano disc she released last year with her sister Maria (2/18).

As with that disc, her solo debut has a carefully planned programme, this time juxtaposing Ravel and Prokofiev and thereby bringing together her own French

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Incessant artistic growth: Marc-André Hamelin plays late Schubert – see review on page 68

and Russian identities. Having often been associated with the legendary violinist Nathan Milstein, Nathalia had to set the record right by posting that ‘I am not that Milstein’. At the same time, she revealed her no less distinguished lineage back to her grandfather, Yakov, whose book on Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier* I myself read as a textbook for students at the Kiev Conservatory.

Taking us from Prokofiev’s brooding Fourth Sonata (dedicated to his good friend Maximilian Schmidthof, who took his own life) to his Toccata, through the youthful Op 12 Ten Pieces and Ravel’s *Tombeau de Couperin*, the emphasis in Milstein’s programme is on memory and connection with the past, as well as a journey from darkness and loss towards celebration of the life-force. Having won the Dublin competition with Prokofiev’s Second Concerto – reportedly another memorial to Schmidthof – her choice of the Fourth Sonata makes a lot of sense. But while her impulsiveness, emotional outbursts and spontaneity are particularly suited to the playful Ten Pieces, it cannot be said that she conveys the sonata’s full depth and subtlety, at least not with the sureness of a Richter. Her rendition of Ravel is flexible and individual, in ways that may surprise

some listeners, but it is charming and convincing in its own terms, as is her account of the Toccata, which showcases her agility while remaining musically poised throughout. **Michelle Assay**

## Saxton

Chacony. Piano Sonata. Hortus musicae – Book 1; Book 2. Lullaby for Rosa

**Clare Hammond** *pf*

Toccata Classics © TOCC0458 (56’ • DDD)



To that old chestnut ‘does the composer write for the instrument or the

performer?’, the answer is probably a bit of both in the case of Robert Saxton’s recent piano music. Hearing Clare Hammond give, in Saxton’s words, a ‘radiant and inspired’ performance of his *Chacony* for piano left hand (1988) for her doctoral recital prompted the composer to embark on a project that yielded two large-scale books for solo piano during a fecund two-year period.

Evocatively entitled *Hortus musicae* (‘A Garden of Music’), the five pieces contained in Book 1, composed in 2013,

are study-like in their tendency to focus on a specific element. Scale-like patterns in contrary motion permeate No 1, repetition and variation are heard in No 2, the contrapuntal elaboration of a quasi-plainchant melody is explored in No 3, modal and pentatonic combinations are fused in No 4, while No 5 draws on all elements in a playful dancelike peroration.

The seven pieces that constitute Book 2 (2015) are more serious in scope. Built on contrasting block-like structures, the set opens with dense and resonant textures dredged from the murky depths of the piano’s low range before sweeping across the piano. Saxton takes more creative risks here, with No 4 presenting a tangle of tunes (some recognisable, others less so) in the form of a Proustian-style musical puzzle. The virtuoso No 7 provides a fitting and dramatic conclusion.

Central to the music’s efficaciousness is Hammond herself, of course. Book 1 arguably foregrounds the surface qualities of her playing, such as purity of line and shape, but Book 2 delves deeper, challenging the pianist to maintain clarity and transparency in often more complex and multilayered settings.

Hammond also gives an excellent account of the much earlier Piano Sonata.

Written in memory of Béla Bartók, it starts with a mercurial main theme which darts around animatedly, pausing for short gasps of breath before surging forwards. The sonata ends with stasis and movement collapsing into one another in a frantic flourish of rising scales and dense chords. That Hammond succeeds on both counts is testimony to her musicianship but also to Saxton's ability to write effectively with performer and instrument in mind.

**Pwyll ap Siôn**

## Schubert

Piano Sonata No 21, D960.

Four Impromptus, D935

**Marc-André Hamelin** *pf*

Hyperion © CDA68213 (82' • DDD)



Marc-André Hamelin is one of those artists who warrant frequent attention. Now 56

and presumably at the peak of his career, he has over a hundred recordings currently available of music by more than a hundred composers. Yet his voracious musical curiosity, always well beyond the most venturesome of his colleagues, has yet to be sated. Perhaps most remarkable is Hamelin's incessant artistic growth. Never knowing quite what to expect next from him, one is frequently pleasantly surprised, when not downright astonished.

His latest offering is Schubert's last sonata, a work that has figured in his recitals for years, with the second set of Impromptus. This is spacious Schubert, secure, august and unrushed. Throughout this vividly characterised B flat Sonata, many heart-gripping moments seem tinged with the nostalgia of leave-taking, though free of bitterness or self-pity. These are counterbalanced by stretches of buoyant joy and unalloyed serenity. In all the variety of Hamelin's generally relaxed tempos, the musical thread lives and breathes, albeit cooled from time to time with what seems an almost existential loneliness. When he repeats the exposition of the first movement, we are grateful. The development has moments of disquiet on a par with the middle section of the *Adagio* of the great C major Quintet.

But it may be in the Sonata's *Andante* that the originality of Hamelin's reading becomes fully evident. With perfect poise, exquisite voice-leading lends the opening theme a chaste, heroic, noble character. Rather than submitting to the inevitable, here grief seems to be faced with equanimity. The Scherzo decisively

turns the page to kinaesthetic delights, with a self-consciously rustic Trio serving to heighten the movement's grace and delicacy. In the finale, Hamelin resists the temptation to become encumbered with detail and instead flings wide the windows to pristine air, sunshine, soaring movement and immense vistas.

The same conceptual freshness informs the Impromptus. For instance, the meltingly ardent A flat Impromptu is delivered with a hushed intimacy, the triplet motion of its contrasting trio section suggesting the delicate unfolding of rose petals. The *Rosamunde* Variations tread gracefully and abound with vivid contrasts. The final F minor Impromptu seems at first cautious, until we perceive that lurking just beneath its diffident surface is something akin to terror.

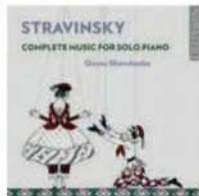
This is not perhaps a recording to replace your favourite Schubert, be it by Schnabel, Haskil, Serkin, Curzon, Pires, Andsnes, Badura-Skoda or Barnatan. But Hamelin's thoughtful originality, supported by his fully realised execution and sincerity of purpose, makes his contribution a worthy complement to them all. Very highly recommended. **Patrick Rucker**

## Stravinsky

'Complete Music for Solo Piano'

**Oxana Shevchenko** *pf*

Delphian © DCD34203 (116' • DDD)



The complete Stravinsky solo works are a daunting undertaking and

Oxana Shevchenko, who took first prize in the 2010 Scottish International Piano Competition, acquits herself with honour. Her playing is certainly energetic enough, and technically adept. At the same time, it would be idle to pretend that she can stand up to current competition. Peter Donohoe's recently issued survey of all the major works is superior in terms of both control and idiomatic insight, while the Guido Agosti *Firebird* transcription, included by Shevchenko but not by Donohoe, is far more dazzling from Alexandre Kantorow. Once upon a time the various minor pieces on the new discs would have been hard to find elsewhere; but that's no longer the case.

Interpretatively, Shevchenko is most persuasive in the early Sonata and Scherzo; but the expressive shaping she demonstrates to good effect there is out of place in the puppet-drama of *Petrushka* and in the poker-faced neoclassicism of the

later Sonata and the Serenade. The greatest problem, however, is with the recorded sound, which is glassy and ill-focused. No doubt the pianist could have done more than she does to accommodate to the instrument and the acoustic; but even if she had, I doubt whether she could have triumphed over such adverse conditions. Not a competitive issue, I fear. **David Fanning**

*The Firebird* (transcr Agosti) – selected comparison:

Kantorow (7/17) (BIS) BIS2150

*Solo piano works* – selected comparison:

Donohoe (3/18) (SOMM) SOMMCD266-2

## 'Paganini at the Piano'

**Busoni** Introduzione e Capriccio (Paganinesco)

**Friedman** Studies on a Theme by Paganini,

Op 47b **Hambourg** Variations on a Theme by

Paganini **Papandopulo** Three Capriccios after

Paganini **Zadora** Eine Paganini-Caprice.

Paganini-Caprice No 19

**Goran Filipec** *pf*

Grand Piano © GP769 (55' • DDD)



My first exposure to the playing of the Croatian pianist Goran Filipec was

on a stunning disc of Paganini studies transcribed by Liszt which I welcomed in June 2016 (Naxos). Just last March my colleague Jed Distler was raving about Filipec's first volume dedicated to the music of Blagoje Bersa (1873-1934) – no, I hadn't either – on the Grand Piano label, one with a growing reputation for championing undiscovered piano repertoire. Admirably, as with the two earlier discs, Filipec acts as his own producer, and once more opts for a Shigeru Kawai EX grand. I cannot honestly say I enjoyed its voicing but, especially in *fortissimo* and above, Filipec's tone production is unpleasantly clangorous.

There is no denying this gifted artist's technical command. His incisive attack in, for instance, Var 8 of Mark Hambourg's Variations, its chordal figurations played at *allegro vivace* with real heft. The cruel left-hand passagework in Var 6 of Ignaz Friedman's Studies on the same 24th Caprice of Paganini are fluently executed. In Var 15 he shows that he has a pleasantly quiet touch when he wants to, but all too often we get the hectoring *martellato* that Friedman requests only in the blaze of octaves that round off the piece.

Such reservations notwithstanding, Filipec is an exciting prospect and his programme is most valuable. What a pleasant change from the Brahms Variations are the Hambourg and Friedman Variations





Sensibility and refinement: Andreas Haefliger, with producer Markus Heiland (seated), continues his series of 'Perspectives'

on the ubiquitous A minor Caprice. The Hambourg is a first recording, as are Michael Zadora's takes on two Caprices (thrilling), and the *Three Capriccios after Paganini* (1981) by the Croatian composer Boris Papandopulo (1906-91), not a dissonant bang-fest as you might expect from those dates but brief, virtuoso neoclassical end-of-recital pieces which are bound to be taken up by others. If you already have the Friedman Studies recorded by Valerie Tryon (APR) or Peter Froudjian (Etcetera), it's worth the repertoire duplication to hear this and the other pieces played by Filipec. **Jeremy Nicholas**

### 'Perspectives 7'

**Beethoven** Piano Sonata No 28, Op 101  
**Berg** Piano Sonata, Op 1 **Liszt** Légende No 1,  
 'St François d'Assise: La prédication aux  
 oiseaux', S175 No 1 **Mussorgsky** Pictures  
 at an Exhibition

**Andreas Haefliger** pf

BIS ④ BIS2307 (87' • DDD/DSD)



The booklet essay is cagey about the rationale behind Andreas Haefliger's

latest instalment of 'programme constellations' each built around a Beethoven sonata (previous instalments have appeared on Avie), and Haefliger himself isn't much more help, declaring 'I simply experience these connections'. Best, I suppose, not to worry too much about the logic behind what is essentially a full two-part recital crammed on to a single disc, and simply to concentrate on the playing.

As the core work, the Op 101 Sonata comes off beautifully; the opening and slow movements are thoughtful, inward and flexible, and the scherzo and finale as articulate and mercurial as you could wish for, without destroying the poetic framework of the whole. Definitely a performance I could happily live with.

Sensibility and refinement are hallmarks of Haefliger's Berg too, along with sympathetic understanding and projection of the polyphonic web of voices. At 14 and a half minutes, this is one of the longer accounts on disc, and this is certainly not the only valid approach. After all, Berg originally headed the piece *Allegro* before adding a *moderato* qualifier, and it comes at the end of half a dozen incomplete attempts at a sonata first movement (one of which eventually found its consummation in the

big third-act interlude in *Wozzeck*). Still, Haefliger is certainly persuasive on his own terms. And so he is in the Liszt *Légende*. Here, if anything, one might crave an even more spacious approach: something like the strictly speaking inimitable Ervin Nyiregyházi, perhaps.

Haefliger takes his time over quite a few of Mussorgsky's *Pictures*, probing them for sonoric and expressive nuances that not many others care to explore. There are many gains here, not least in terms of harmonic sensitivity and proto-Impressionist subtlety of pedalling, but also, arguably, some losses in momentum and objectivity. Perhaps it depends on how much you want your attention to be drawn to the suggestive qualities of each 'picture' and how much to the feelings of its contemplator.

Thinking of this as an imagined concert experience, I certainly come away feeling enriched. As a recording for repeated listenings, it leaves me rather in two minds. **David Fanning**

► See The Musician & the Score on page 48

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# Thea Musgrave

When it comes to the music of this admired Scottish composer, it's all about the drama below the surface, writes **Kate Molleson**

**A**sked once whether she had any advice for young composers, Thea Musgrave replied: 'Don't, unless you really have to; then you'll do it anyway.' Musgrave – the Scottish composer, conductor, pianist and teacher who turns 90 this month – has lived by her own advice. There's a clear-sighted rationality to her approach, to the way she speaks about her music, to the way she adheres to deadlines and writes practical, non-fussy scores that endear her to commissioners and orchestral musicians.

But beneath the pragmatism, Musgrave's music is all about drama. Whether in her searingly perceptive operas or her non-narrative instrumental works, she has long been fascinated by the innate drama of human behaviour: the psychological dance of conversation, interaction, confrontation and appeasement. She's a composer who recognises that music mirrors life, that music can shape the way we live, that the emotional and even physical makeup of musicians is integral to the impact of any performance. To put it simply, her work speaks directly and compassionately about all of us. 'There are basic human truths,' she says, and it is those truths that she probes in her music.

*'There was such a positive feeling of hope and freedom in Paris after the war. It was easier to speak about important things'*

Born in an Edinburgh suburb (Barnton) on May 27, 1928, she studied at the University of Edinburgh, where she was strongly influenced by the legacy of Donald Francis Tovey and his belief that meaning in classical music comes from the internal evidence of the music itself: in other words, that there's more than enough drama in the way notes relate to each other without grafting on some kind of external programmatic narrative.

After graduating, Musgrave trod the path of so many 20th-century composers. She was offered a scholarship to study at the Paris Conservatoire with Nadia Boulanger, whose fastidious ear and fierce attention to craft founded in Musgrave a lifelong propensity for clarity, especially when it comes to orchestration. She looks back fondly on her time in France. 'There was such a positive feeling of hope and freedom in Paris right after the war', she says, 'that I have always considered myself to be lucky to be there at that specific moment. Coming after the horrors of the war and the occupation, it was easier to speak about important things.'



Musgrave spent four years in the French capital, during which time her music began to turn heads back home. Those student works often tended towards a Scottish folk influence: the *Suite O' Bairnsangs* (1953), for example, which is a collection of children's songs commissioned by a festival in Braemar and setting the Scots words of poet Maurice Lindsay. In 1954, Musgrave returned to Edinburgh to serve a composing apprenticeship; in 1955, her *Cantata for a Summer's Day* marked her Edinburgh International Festival debut, while early orchestral works – *Obliques* (1958) and the *Scottish Dance Suite* (1959) – were premiered by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. Meanwhile the London scene seduced her south. Eventually she relocated and wrote works of unapologetic complexity for the Proms and the new Royal Festival Hall.

As a teacher, Musgrave is committed and holistic. A typical class requires each student to defend why a symphony should be commissioned in place of funding a new hospital ward. In the early 1970s, she was invited to take up a guest professorship at the University of California, Santa Barbara – it was an offer that proved life-changing. The university commissioned a new work to mark an important date in the academic calendar. Musgrave wrote an *Elegy* for the finest musicians at the university: the cellist Geoffrey Rutkowski and the viola-player Peter Mark. The next year she married Mark. The couple returned to the UK for a spell – London, then Manchester – but when Mark was asked to help set up





## MUSGRAVE FACTS

**Born** in Edinburgh; trained in Paris with Nadia Boulanger; lived in the USA since the 1970s, darting between New York, Los Angeles and Virginia

**Conducted** many of her own works, including the premiere performance of her acclaimed opera *Mary, Queen of Scots*, at the 1977 Edinburgh International Festival

**Her music** has rarely been overtly political, but many of her stage works focus on epic historic figures such as Simon Bolívar

**Musgrave is often asked** about being a 'woman composer'. A typical reply: 'Yes, I am a woman; and I am a composer. But rarely at the same time.' She is, after all, of a generation who trailblazed against a backdrop of huge social change, defying the status quo through a deft balance of pragmatism and doggedness.

a new opera company in Norfolk, Virginia, Musgrave encouraged him to jump at the chance and they have lived together in the USA ever since. Nearly half

a century later, her accent floats somewhere in the mid-Atlantic.

What about her music? 'I was never part of an ideological group of composers', she says, 'but was close to a few composers who are very important to me personally.' She names Richard Rodney Bennett and Iain Hamilton. There's the distinct mark of Charles Ives, too, from whom she learned about dramatic set-ups and juxtapositions. After testing the waters of serialism, she returned to essentially tonal harmonies, with plenty of room for manoeuvre. She's written works with electronics – 1987's *Narcissus*, for example, for flute and digital delay system. But regardless of forces or harmonic language, Musgrave's greatest skill is in her sense of dramatic tension and pacing.

'I tend to think of music as drama,' she says, 'moving from one place to another and usually through some kind of conflict. That is why I feel opera is so natural for me.' And indeed: her operatic works are gripping, unflinching portrayals of three-dimensional characters who seem to breathe and feel and mess up like the rest of us. After her early stage works – *The Abbot of Drimock* (1955), *The Decision* (1965), *The Voice of Ariadne* (1972-73) – it was her vision of Mary, Queen of Scots in the opera of the same name that shot her to international repute. 'I'm the right person to write about that,' she later reflected. 'I'm a woman, I was educated in France, I'm a Scot.' She conducted the premiere at the Edinburgh International Festival and the potency of her compassion for the young Mary – newly returned to Scotland

as a widow, a Catholic queen in a Protestant country – hit audience and critics hard. That intense empathy and sense of justice would be a common thread in her operas to come.

Over a career spanning 60 years and counting, Musgrave has turned to myriad inspirations, from literature to visual arts to nature. The resounding commonality – even in her absolute music – is her sense of drama, whether in small gestures or broad structure or grand message. She coined a term for it: the 'dramatic-abstract', whose inspiration literally came to her in a dream. 'I was conducting', she later recalled, 'and a member of the orchestra suddenly stood up and got agitated. I thought, "What am I going to do?" Then I woke up, and laughed.' This dream occurred in the 1960s. The following day she received a letter from Birmingham asking for an orchestral work. 'When I came to write it, I decided to have a player stand up and agitate.'

It's no surprise that Musgrave is drawn to concerto form. The dynamics between the one and the many are a gift for setting up scenarios of conflict and resolution. In the once-notorious Clarinet Concerto (1968), she uses the soloist as a troublemaker, roaming through the orchestra, reading off rank-and-file music stands, rallying groups of musicians then wandering off to form rival allegiances elsewhere. In the Horn Concerto (1971), offstage orchestral horns surround the audience and answer the calls of the soloist in voices that are flippant and mocking. They stage noisy coups. They distort. At the premiere, one critic asked, 'Do they have to lock the doors to stop people leaving at the sound of this contemporary music?' The soloist Barry Tuckwell replied, 'There's a horn player at every exit so no one can leave!'

And yet Musgrave's works have a solidity that keeps the volatility from toppling into chaos. She often starts working from a moment of craziness, like that dream in the 1960s, then builds a framework. Call it risk control, call it playing safe, but the point is this: the crazy spark remains at the heart of Musgrave's music, while the robust, impeccable frameworks allow us to get close. **G**

## LISTENING TO THEA MUSGRAVE

A snapshot of her style, symphonic, chamber and choral

**Turbulent Landscapes**

NMC (A/09)

Music that captures the grand power and fluidity of Turner's paintings, superbly played by the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Osmo Vänskä.

**Concertos. Monologue. Excursions**

Lyrta

Featuring the rule-breaking concertos for clarinet (Gervase de Peyer) and horn (Barry Tuckwell), we also get to hear Musgrave herself playing the four-hand piano work *Excursions*.

**'Chamber Works for Oboe'**

Harmonia Mundi (6/13)

Intensely poetic playing from Nicholas Daniel leading a top group including pianist Huw Watkins and clarinetist Joy Farrall.

**Choral Works**

Bridge

A chance to hear Musgrave's crystalline writing for voices. Michael York is narrator with the New York Virtuoso Singers conducted by Harold Rosenbaum.



# Vocal



## David Gutman embraces Prokofiev's Ivan the Terrible:

*'Frank Strobel gives us an "authentic" stop-start realisation, with vamp-until-ready connective tissue and noises off'* ► REVIEW ON PAGE 79



## Alexandra Coghlan on a road home with Sante Fe Desert Chorale:

*'The excellent ensemble gamely perform everything with full-wattage brilliance and brio'* ► REVIEW ON PAGE 81

## JS Bach



Cantatas - No 22, *Jesus nahm zu sich die Zwölfe*; No 75, *Die Elenden sollen essen*; No 127, *Herr Jesu Christ, wahr' Mensch und Gott*  
**Hannah Morrison** *sop* **Carlos Mena** *countertenor*  
**Hans-Jörg Mammel** *ten* **Matthias Vieweg** *bass*  
**Ricercar Consort / Philippe Pierlot**  
 Mirare © MIR332 (66' • DDD • T/T)



Consolation is, of course, a prevalent conceit in Bach's expressive armoury

(as dictated by the cyclical requirements of the church calendar) and Philippe Pierlot inhabits it with perspicacious zeal in highly engaged readings of three magnificent cantatas. They are pieces over which Bach clearly took considerable trouble, including the first cantata he presented for audition in Leipzig and the inaugural work on his appointment soon after. On this evidence, such levels of thematic programming gratifyingly resolve the potential knottiness of listening to one Bach choral work after another.

*Die Elenden sollen essen* represents his debut cantata as an employee, and in its scale and ambition it must have made a serious impression on parishioners. While Pierlot opts for a single-voice choir, such is the questing intensity of the rounded palate of voices and instruments that even those for whom one-to-a-part Bach isn't to their taste will not fail to be won over. The devil's in the detail with the Ricercar Consort, as you can hear in the exquisite tenor aria, 'Mein Jesus soll mein alles sein'. The power of its singular rising motif provides an obsessional longing, not dissimilar to 'Ach mein Sinn' in the first version of the *St John Passion*, and as gloriously believable as you'll hear.

Indeed, the key to the success of these readings is that while they are rooted in transparency, they are vibrantly resonant, boldly directional and never brittle. The arias tend to portray the singers as *primus inter pares* with the obbligato instruments

as real partners in the dialogue; and if the singers' coloratura is not always convincing, the relationships between Pierlot's deeply felt, strongly rhetorical and sinewy lines always prevail. How exceptionally the opening of *Jesus nahm zu sich die Zwölfe* conveys the heavy-hearted Jesus as he tries to prepare the uncomprehending disciples for the journey to Jerusalem and his death. It's a masterpiece of imagery and Pierlot has its full measure.

Just when you feel it cannot improve, the Ricercar Consort present a cantata of the most profound poignancy. Death was never far away in Bach's family – an orphan at 10, widower at 35, and 10 infant deaths – and *Jesu Christ, wahr' Mensch und Gott* traverses the experience like few others in Bach's oeuvre. The pizzicato funeral bells of the soprano lullaby are among many delights, with Emmanuel Laporte's oboe-playing representing the golden thread in a lovingly conceived and executed project.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

## Beethoven

Missa solemnis, Op 123

**Ann-Helen Moen** *sop* **Roxana Constantinescu** *mez*

**James Gilchrist** *ten* **Benjamin Bevan** *bass*

**Ryo Terakado** *vn* **Bach Collegium Japan /**

**Masaaki Suzuki**

BIS © BIS2321 (74' • DDD/DSD • T/T)



Listening to this bright and honest *Missa solemnis* brings memories of the 1970s

and early '80s, when period-instrument bands and medium-size professional choirs were opening ears with new textures, colours and balances. A popular phrase back then likened it to 'cleaning up old paintings', but there was also a sense of clearing away much of the anachronistic baggage some great works had acquired over the years to find something that could have been its original context. Notwithstanding that there have been other superb period versions of this work

since then – notably by Gardiner (Archiv, 3/91) and Harnoncourt (Sony Classical, 8/16) – there is quite a feel of that sort here. In short, this sounds like a Beethoven whose personal experience of sacred choral music was of Haydn, Hummel and Cherubini rather than one who was imagining the world to come in Berlioz, Brahms or Verdi. And although that is not the only way to look at it, it certainly has much to recommend it.

The sound first. Suzuki's choir is marginally smaller than Gardiner's Monteverdi Choir and, while in technical terms less assured than them (though more so than Harnoncourt's Arnold Schoenberg Choir), it achieves a greater clarity and openness of texture. This immediately makes pitch, harmony and counterpoint more easily apparent, in itself a considerable advantage in demystifying this 'difficult' work, and the same can be said for Suzuki's soloists, none of whom has (or at any rate uses) a 'big hall' vibrato. James Gilchrist's decidedly English-sounding tenor is an unexpected presence here but his lean and flexible tone certainly adds to the humanising effect.

Similar transparency in the orchestra, aided by a favourable balance, also adds quick details and striking colours not always audible elsewhere: Suzuki shows Norringtonian delight in bringing out Beethoven's rhythmic impulses (especially valuable in the many places where tied notes anticipate a bar line), giving the timpani their head, letting the winds squawk excitedly in the 'in gloria Dei Patris' fugue of the *Gloria* or soulfully commune at the start of the *Sanctus*, and firmly delineating the strands in even as straightforward-looking a prospect as the opening of the *Credo*.

And what of the greater effect? Well, nobody would claim that this is a heavyweight *Missa solemnis*. With Suzuki's vision of it apparently residing so much in making aurally it comprehensible and human in scale, some of the other deeper, broader or higher levels that are available prove elusive. Despite some lovely moments and





Humanising effect: Masaaki Suzuki and the Bach Collegium Japan bring a lean transparency to Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*

surprising sounds, there are perhaps too many places – notably parts of the *Agnus Dei* – where droops in energy suggest that the personal intensity of a bigger picture is lacking. Where Gardiner's recording is a sleek, expertly controlled Mass of the Enlightenment and Harnoncourt's a profoundly Catholic statement by turns tender, fervent and terrifying, Suzuki's successes with it seem to come principally from his keen ear and personal charm. For those who find weightier performances daunting (and nothing wrong with that!), this friendly account is certainly worth hearing, but in the wider context it leaves much unsaid. **Lindsay Kemp**

## Britten · Debussy · Fauré

'Illuminations'

**Britten** *Les illuminations*<sup>a</sup> **Debussy** *Ariettes oubliées*<sup>b</sup> **Fauré** *La bonne chanson*<sup>c</sup>

**Nicholas Phan** *ten*<sup>b,c</sup> **Myra Huang** *pf*<sup>c</sup> **Telegraph Quartet**; <sup>a</sup>**The Knights** / **Colin and Eric Jacobsen**  
Avie Ⓢ AV2382 (63' • DDD • T/t)



Nicholas Phan's previous releases have shown him to be not only a fine singer but

a fine programmer, too. His latest album continues the trend and juxtaposes three works – two to texts by Verlaine, one to a text by Rimbaud – that provide an unalloyed hour of pleasure.

He is joined in the first two works by his regular accompanist, Myra Huang, who plays with a lovely mixture of sensitivity and delicacy – listen to her at the opening of Debussy's 'C'est l'extase langoureuse', for example, or the start of Fauré's 'Avant que tu ne t'en ailles'. The Telegraph Quartet fill out the textures of the Fauré beautifully, too.

Phan's own interpretations set the tone. Here's a singer who puts music and words first, without ever resorting to the self-regard that surely must be a temptation in music as seductive as this. There are more purely beguiling voices out there – Phan's tenor is not the juiciest, and it can develop a beat under pressure – but he sings with intelligence, sensitivity and poise, not to mention an appealing gentleness and patience. His French is correct, perhaps, rather than meltingly idiomatic, but he communicates directly and affectingly.

After two French composers, the work that gives the disc its title showcases the young Benjamin Britten in Francophone mode. The brilliance of *Les illuminations*

rarely fails to come across. And though Phan's account with The Knights is not, as with the other works on the disc, likely to dislodge any existing favourites, it is highly persuasive and difficult to resist. The tenor's virtues pay dividends here and the playing of the orchestra is beautifully alive and alert, with some excellent solo work. With detailed and clear sound, this is a recital that can be safely recommended.

**Hugo Shirley**

## Feo

San Francesco di Sales

**Monica Piccinini, Roberta Mameli** *sops*

**Delphine Galou** *contr* **Luca Tittoto** *bass*

**Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra** / **Fabio Biondi** *vn*

Glossa Ⓢ ② GCD923409 (138' • DDD)



Little known today, Francesco Feo (1691-1761) was a Neapolitan

composer and teacher, a contemporary of Leonardo Leo and Niccolò Jommelli. He composed a number of operas, the most famous being *Siface, re di Numidia*, plus sacred music. Charles Burney described his works as 'full of fire and invention' but his

reputation faded in the 19th century. The indefatigable Fabio Biondi has unearthed one of his oratorios for this recording. The first performance of *San Francesco di Sales, Apostolo del Chablais* took place in Bologna in 1734. It is an oratorio on a small scale in terms of its scoring – four soloists, chamber choir, standard Baroque orchestra – but of considerable length (2h 18' here).

The oratorio focuses on François de Sales, Bishop of Geneva and later canonised as a saint. He was known for his religious writings and, in the 20th century, he was proclaimed patron saint of Catholic writers. Feo's work, to an anonymous libretto, doesn't set any action or events from the saint's life but is more a series of reflections where 'Deceit' and 'Heresy' are pitted against Francesco and an Angel.

I'd challenge Burney's 'fire and invention' description of Feo's music to an extent. While much of *San Francesco di Sales* is attractive, little of it is truly memorable so that the oratorio's sequence of recitatives and arias becomes something of a trial where one number sounds much like another. My interest was piqued due to aspects of Feo's orchestration, such as the martial trumpets and the obbligato violin line (from Biondi himself) in Deceit's aria 'Tutte dell'Erebo', which make you sit up and take notice, as do the swirling oboes that open his 'Come stridente fulmine' or the flutes that chirrup in San Francesco's 'Sommo Dio, dal ciel discenda'. The Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra continuo are sensitively deployed, never getting in the way.

Biondi has assembled an excellent line-up of singers. Delphine Galou's willowy contralto brings great nobility to San Francesco, soft-grained but never plummy. Monica Piccinini's agile soprano makes for a sparky, pure-toned Angel, while Roberta Mameli deploys a warmer vibrato as Heresy. Sturdy bass Luca Tittoto sings with a good deal of nuance as Deceit, even if his coloratura isn't always even.

Mark Pullinger

## W Jackson

Twelve Songs, Op 1 – No 1, The heavy hours are almost past<sup>a</sup>; No 2, Blest as th'immortal gods is he<sup>a</sup>; No 3, For ever, Fortune, wilt thou prove<sup>b</sup>; No 5, In vain you tell your parting lover<sup>c</sup>; No 9, 'Twas when the seas were roaring<sup>d</sup>; No 12, Ianth the lovely, the joy of her swain<sup>d</sup>. Twelve Songs, Op 4 – No 2, My banks they are furnish'd with bees<sup>e</sup>; No 4, Ye shepherds give ear to my lay<sup>e</sup>; No 8, Let me approach my sleeping love<sup>e</sup>. Twelve Songs, Op 7 – No 6, Night to lovers' joys a friend<sup>d</sup>. Twelve Canzonets, Op 9 – No 1, Time has not thinn'd my flowing hair<sup>f</sup>; No 5, Ah! where does my Phillida stray?<sup>g</sup>; No 8, O Venus! hear my

ardent prayer<sup>f</sup>. Twelve Pastorals, Op 15 – No 7, Lone minstrel of the midnight hour<sup>h</sup>. Twelve Songs, Op 16<sup>e</sup> – No 4, Again returns the blushful May; No 6, Sweet was the sun's last parting ray. Sonata, Op 10 No 4<sup>i</sup>

efg Emma Kirkby sop Irene Mas Salom df sop/bi/vn

abco Charles Daniels ten <sup>h</sup> Maria-Antònia Melià fl

bi Bernat Cabot vn <sup>i</sup> Cristina Trenchs va

ci Sylvia Serrano vc <sup>j</sup> Timothy Roberts hpd

abcde fgh Ars Musicae, Mallorca

Toccata Classics © TOCCO477 (73' • DDD • T)



The avid amateur astronomer William Jackson (1730-1803) was director of music at Exeter Cathedral and a friend of Gainsborough. Michael Kelly (Mozart's first Don Basilio) reminisced that Jackson 'was a man of great taste and musical research, but very eccentric'. This examination of the little-known Devonian's songs is the brainchild of harpsichordist Timothy Roberts, who has edited the music, authored an excellent booklet note and plays continuo on about half of the pieces (the others feature Paul Nicholson – nowadays the priest-in-charge of the recording venue, St Saviour's Church in Hampstead, London).

Published between about 1755 and 1770, most songs bring to mind the sort of tuneful strophic ballads JC Bach produced for Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens. They frequently feature four-part strings played by the Majorcan instrumental ensemble Ars Musicae with sensitive limpidity, albeit with a few blemishes of imperfect tuning. Charles Daniels and Emma Kirkby perform with their customary intelligence regarding phrasing, words and ornaments – a few elements are not as effortless as they used to be, but they impart plenty of wisdom and charming ideas to this fascinating repertoire. Daniels's melancholy 'In vain you tell your parting lover' is accompanied gracefully by Roberts and cellist Silvia Serrano, whereas two flutes from Ars Musicae double the violins in Kirkby's playful 'Again returns the blushful May'. When not playing second violin, Irene Mas Salom sings with a firm, sustained legato in Jackson's elegant setting of John Gay's 'Twas when the seas were roaring' (verses famous from a setting attributed to Handel), and combines deftly with Kirkby in two canzonets. At the centre of the programme is a charming Sonata in A minor (Op 10 No 4, c1773) – essentially a miniature harpsichord concerto accompanied by string quartet, played adroitly by Roberts and the Majorcan strings. David Vickers

## Karlsson

Seven Songs to Texts by Pär Lagerkvist<sup>a</sup>.

Clarinet Concerto<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Gabriel Suovanen bar <sup>b</sup> Christoffer Sundqvist cl

Lapland Chamber Orchestra / John Storgårds

BIS © BIS2286 (55' • DDD/DSD • T/T)



Gabriel Suovanen suggested Lars Karlsson (b1953) write a song-cycle

for him when the two men ran into one another at a Helsinki tram stop. And just as the history of Nordic music is criss-crossed with incidents relating to trams, so Karlsson's cycle is very much rooted in the song tradition of Oskar Merikanto, Leevi Madetoja and Toivo Kuula. Expressionist texts by the Swedish Nobel laureate Pär Lagerkvist, filled with nature metaphors and charting a journey from the existential angst of youth to the contemplative acceptance of death, only reinforce the idea.

But there's a vital difference between being rooted in a tradition and immersing yourself in it, which is where I find Karlsson's *Seven Songs* troubling. There's nothing wrong with writing in a tonal idiom per se, of course, but to my ears Karlsson doesn't sufficiently add to, refract or reimagine the tonal language of the 19th and early 20th centuries or the shape and formulas of its melodies. The sharp-witted Lapland Chamber Orchestra never fail to highlight the sudden evocation of text Karlsson embeds in the band but the net effect is that it winds up sounding obvious and passé even underneath Suovanen's open-hearted singing. The tremolo strings in III, the horn solo in IV – all highly evocative but you get the feeling you've heard it many times before.

Karlsson originally intended to write an overtly Nordic clarinet concerto based on the idea of something shamanistic – a quality of Christoffer Sundqvist's beguiling playing if ever there was one. That idea was scrapped in favour of an ultra-traditional concerto built upon the intervals of the fourth and fifth. Sundqvist's account is sensitive and intelligent; the orchestra is supple and spacious in the 'Valse triste' central movement and digs into Karlsson's building tensions in the finale. There is impressive clarity in the handling of the work's motifs and in its wider journey. There is very little wrong with it, in fact. But there is even less distinctive or bold about it. Andrew Mellor



## Koželuch

Kantata zur Krönung Leopolds II,  
'Heil dem Monarchen', P XIX:6

Kristýna Vylíčilová *sop* Tomáš Kořínek, Josef  
Moravec *tens* Filip Dvořák *hpd* Martinů Voices;  
Prague Symphony Orchestra / Marek Štílec  
Naxos (M) 8 573787 (71' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at the Church of St Simon and Jude,  
Prague, January 31, 2017



'Leopold Koželuch is  
without question with  
young and old the  
most generally loved

among our living composers, and this with  
justification', proclaimed the *Lexikon der  
Tonkünstler* in 1790. An exaggeration,  
perhaps (many commentators would have  
nominated Haydn), but not by much. By  
all accounts a wily political operator, the  
Bohemian-born Koželuch (1747-1818)  
vied with Mozart for the approbation of  
the Viennese aristocracy and achieved  
European fame as a prolific composer,  
teacher and publisher. With two Habsburg  
cantatas already to his credit, he was the  
go-to man in 1791 for a cantata to mark the  
Prague coronation of Emperor Leopold II  
as King of Bohemia. While the coronation  
opera, Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*,  
evidently bored the imperial couple ('most  
of us fell asleep', reported the Empress),  
Koželuch's celebratory cantata *Heil dem  
Monarchen* was an immediate success and  
further boosted his standing with the  
Habsburgs. The following year, after the  
Emperor's premature death, he received  
a court appointment for life.

Like *La clemenza di Tito*, the cantata  
holds up a flattering, idealising mirror to  
the Emperor-King, who emerges not only  
as a spotless hero and beneficent father  
figure but, towards the end, as a Christ-  
like redeemer. As Allan Badley points out  
in his detailed note, the words of the final  
chorus, 'Long live our nation's protecting  
deity', ruffled a few clerical feathers.  
The cantata – fashioned as a sequence  
of recitatives, arias and choruses – is  
a polished, professional piece of work  
but only fitfully rises above agreeable  
occasional music. Much of Koželuch's  
invention has a Singspiel plainness and  
homeliness, often sounding like Mozart  
without the master's transfiguring touch.  
The most memorable music comes in two  
graceful soprano arias, the first – a prayer  
to the Virgin – softly coloured by clarinets,  
bassoons and horns (shades here of *Così  
fan tutte*). Elsewhere Leopold's boundless  
benevolence is celebrated in a charming  
if over-extended pastoral chorus, while

his emergence as the nation's redeemer  
prompts a gently lyrical trio.

The performance of this Classical rarity  
is adequate, no more. The slimmed-down  
Prague Symphony Orchestra play alertly  
enough, with ear-catching woodwind  
contributions in Koželuch's many solos,  
and the small chorus are capable, if slightly  
thin-toned. But Marek Štílec's direction  
strikes me as too neutral, lacking in  
animation and specific shaping. Too  
many movements seem merely to jog  
or amble. The German words of both the  
main soloists are often indecipherable –  
admittedly not as serious a problem in this  
adulatory verbosity as it would be in, say,  
Goethe's *Faust*. Tomáš Kořínek's tenor is  
distinctly raw and monochrome. Happily,  
soprano Kristýna Vylíčilová is far easier on  
the ear and sings with feeling both in her  
touching arias and in a dramatic recitative  
that evokes Austria's turbulent past.

Richard Wigmore

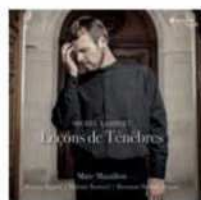
## M Lambert

M Lambert *Leçons de Ténèbres* (first cycle)

Gautier Tombeau de Mezangeau Hotman  
Allemande. Courante. Prélude non mesuré pour  
viole seule (attrib)

Marc Mauillon *bass* Myriam Rignol *va da gamba*  
Thibaut Roussel *theorbo* Marouan Mankar-Bennis  
*hpd/org*

Harmonia Mundi (H) 2 HMM90 2363/4  
(105' • DDD • T/t)



Michel Lambert was  
admired as a singer,  
lutenist and teacher  
in 17th-century Paris

and, while remembered today as Lully's  
father-in-law, he was also a composer of  
merit. An early set of nine settings from  
the Lamentations of Jeremiah, Lambert's  
*Leçons de Ténèbres* have come down to us  
in manuscript, simply scored for solo  
voice and continuo. Sensitive interpretation  
here by the baritone Marc Mauillon, they  
are both contemplative and – in this, the  
first complete recording – cumulative in  
their intensity.

Imagine yourself, then, in the court  
chapel of the young Louis XIV, its  
windows darkened by drapes, the candles  
gradually extinguished over the three days  
of Tenebrae services preceding the most  
important event in the Catholic liturgy,  
when the chapel would again be flooded  
with light and a sense of renewal. Mauillon  
and his colleagues have taken as their  
assumption that Lambert, a court musician  
in his own right, might well have  
performed this music himself. Mauillon,

who is usually to be heard in earlier music,  
is especially well placed, vocally, to realise  
the quasi-improvisational, spiritual qualities  
of Lambert's sublimely conceived music.

In Myriam Rignol, Thibaut Roussel and  
Marouan Mankar-Bennis he has chosen  
remarkable collaborators, each prepared  
to immerse themselves in the relationship  
between text and music, then together  
plan and pace the realisation of each *leçon*  
in order to reflect Lambert's original  
intentions. Their accompaniments are  
subtle, intricate and incredibly varied – so  
much so that listeners to this set will feel  
compelled to return to it again to admire  
their artistry.

The unwavering, honest quality of  
Mauillon's reedy voice – so suited to earlier  
music – works perfectly in this context,  
creating the sense of a cantus firmus on  
which the instrumentalists elaborate. The  
beautifully executed instrumental solos  
by Lambert's contemporaries Ennemond  
Gaultier and Nicolas Hotman, carefully  
positioned at the beginning and end of  
several of the *leçons*, offer appropriate  
moments of respite. Might this release have  
laid down a new benchmark in the revival  
of 17th-century performing practices?  
I think so. Julie Anne Sadie

## Lassus

St Matthew Passion

Musica Ficta / Bo Holten

Naxos (M) 8 573840 (88' • DDD)



It's nearly 25 years  
since Paul Hillier's  
Theatre of Voices  
recorded this

*St Matthew Passion* (Harmonia Mundi,  
9/94). As I hinted then, Lassus's share  
of the music would probably breach the  
trades descriptions act: following other  
Renaissance Passion settings the parts of  
Christ and the Evangelist – the bulk of the  
music, in other words – are sung in chant.  
Bo Holten introduces additional polyphony  
at regular intervals, drawn from the  
composer's vast output (the unidentified  
*Agnus Dei* at the end is from the Mass *Dixit  
Joseph*). It's a broader canvas than Hillier's  
taut, compact reading, the integration of  
polyphonic items more convincing than  
in Ex Cathedra's account (Somm, 8/11).  
Which to choose between Hillier  
and Holten is a moot point; personal  
preference as to the ratio of plainchant  
to polyphony will predispose listeners  
one way or the other.

I say this since, for all their differences in  
approach (most obviously the versions of

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the plainchant), Hillier's and Holten's accounts have similar strengths and weaknesses. Holten's Christ and his Evangelist are fuller and broader in tone, in line with the general approach, though Hillier's Christ is markedly fuller than his lithe Evangelist (Paul Elliot). Lauritz Jakob Thomsen's Christ, for Holten's new recording, shades Hillier's due to greater security of intonation and expressive range (the shaping of the melismatic 'Amen' that begins many of Christ's pronouncements is very affecting). Theatre of Voices are more compact and incisive than Musica Ficta but less even. That said, the more polished Swedish choir doesn't quite attain the limits of pathos in *Tristis est anima mea* (compare with Siglo de Oro's recent recording – Delphian, 4/18); all the same, as a presentation of a Renaissance Passion to a modern audience this is very persuasive. **Fabrice Fitch**

## Mahler

Das Lied von der Erde (arr Schoenberg/Riehn)  
**Dagmar Pecková** *mez* **Richard Samek** *ten*  
**Schoenberg Chamber Orchestra / Petr Altrichter**  
Supraphon © SU4242-2 (58' • DDD • T/t)



Reiner Riehn's completion of Arnold Schoenberg's chamber arrangement of

*Das Lied von der Erde* has made several appearances on disc, with half a dozen or so versions currently available. The very reasons Schoenberg embarked upon his arrangement no doubt play a role, but there are good grounds for performing this version beyond the merely practical (and financial). The intimacy of these remarkable songs is underlined, and though one of course misses the luxuriousness of the full-orchestral sound at key moments – and the soundscape of 'Der Abschied' inevitably loses some of its desolate vastness – there's a heightened sense of the sinewy modernity of the music.

The ingeniousness and effectiveness of the arrangement certainly come across in the playing of the Schoenberg Chamber Orchestra under the expert, swift direction of Petr Altrichter in this new recording. First violin Jakub Fišer leads from the front with solo work that is full of wit and tenderness. Supraphon's booklet charts some of the history of *Das Lied* in the Bohemian lands and this idiomatic playing certainly taps into that long tradition.

Unfortunately it's more difficult to be enthusiastic about the singing, with both tenor and mezzo captured unnaturally in

engineering that surrounds the voices with hazy reverb. Richard Samek is solid and reliable in his songs but both his German and, especially, that of Dagmar Pecková is accented. The mezzo conjures up some soulfulness and grandeur in her contributions and still manages to be moving in 'Der Abschied' but the voice is cloudy and short-breathed, the words indistinct and swallowed.

I'd recommend sticking with such alternatives as Osmo Vänskä's 1994 outstanding BIS account. **Hugo Shirley**

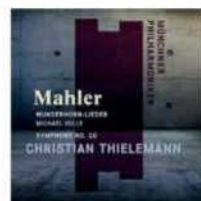
*Selected comparison:*

*Groop, Silvasti, Sinf Labti Chbr Ens, Vänskä*  
(7/95) (BIS) BIS-CD681

## Mahler

Wunderhorn Lieder<sup>a</sup> – Der Schildwache  
Nachtlied; Wer hat dies Liedlein erdacht;  
Rheinlegendchen; Wo die schönen Trompeten  
blasen; Lied des Verfolgten im Turm; Das  
irdische Leben; Der Tamboursg'sell; Urlicht.  
Symphony No 10 – Adagio

<sup>a</sup>**Michael Volle** *bar* **Munich Philharmonic**  
**Orchestra / Christian Thielemann**  
Münchner Philharmoniker © MPHIL0007  
(60' • DDD • T)



It may be appropriate that a concert given on the centenary of Mahler's death should

contain his last completed symphonic movement. And on this Munich Philharmonic release the *Adagio* from the Tenth provides a substantial – if slightly unusual – coupling for eight 'Wunderhorn' Songs performed at the same concert, which formed the basis for this recording.

It represents an intriguing prospect, not least because Christian Thielemann the Mahler conductor is not exactly over-represented in the catalogue. One immediately notices the care he lavishes on the songs: there's real élan in 'Der Schildwache Nachtlied'; a rare, almost tangible urgency in 'Das irdische Leben'; and a lilt and tenderness in 'Rheinlegendchen' that serves as an encouraging sign for his assignment conducting the Vienna Philharmonic's 2019 New Year's Concert.

Michael Volle's singing is often very fine, too, always dramatically pointed and naturally communicative. The words come across clearly but unfussily, and there's a moving sincerity and integrity to his performances. He offers real drama in 'Lied des Verfolgten im Turm' and is moving in 'Der Tamboursg'sell.' Elsewhere, though, there's a slight

unsteadiness and a lack of long legato lines in 'Wo die schönen Trompeten blasen' and, especially, in an 'Urlicht' where one senses Thielemann is forced to choose a tempo faster than he'd like.

There's certainly no shortage of long lines in the Tenth's *Adagio*, though, given in a performance that breathes in grand paragraphs and builds up inexorably to its shattering climax. Thielemann's Mahler can feel a little too well balanced – a steady hand apparently also means for him arguably too level a head – but this is still a wonderful performance, whose soaring intensity is underpinned by terrific playing from the orchestra. The violins wring all the feeling out of Mahler's lines and the brass are generous and incisive. The engineering in both works captures the orchestra in vivid, warm close-up.

**Hugo Shirley**

## Martin • Martinů

'The Secret Mass'

**Martin** Mass for Double Choir. Songs of Ariel  
**Martinů** Four Songs of the Virgin Mary, H235.  
Romance of the Dandelions, H364

**Danish National Vocal Ensemble / Marcus Creed**  
OUR Recordings © 6 220671  
(64' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



This is an intriguing programme. Though one might initially think that it is

simply inspired by the juxtaposition of the composers' names, in fact they were both born in 1890 and their careers were both singular enough to make a comparison of their work a project of considerable interest. Martin's Mass has gone from a work hardly performed to a staple of the choral repertoire, and justly so: it is a composition of tremendous luminosity and great variety. This performance is not the most engaging I have heard – for that one would need The Sixteen, Westminster Cathedral Choir or the Vasari Singers – but the choral sound is rich and warm. There is something a little perfunctory, for example, about the *Kyrie*, and especially the 'Christe', which sounds rushed, but the choir's response to the later movements of the work is deeply affecting.

In any case, the rest of the disc is greatly impressive. Martin's wonderful *Songs of Ariel* are given a virtuoso rendition that brings out every nuance and are alone worth the price of the disc. But the addition of the choral works by Martinů creates a wholly unusual and effective balance in the programming. The *Four*

*Songs of the Virgin Mary* are works of tremendous subtlety, and beautifully sung: while they are peaks of the Czech choral repertoire, I do hope that performances by non-Czech choirs, especially of this standard, will bring these works into greater international circulation. The *Romance of the Dandelions* is also a thing of beauty, and while possibly more difficult to programme, if you have a soprano of the quality of Klaudia Kidon, you are surely guaranteed success. **Ivan Moody**

*Martin Mass for Double Choir – selected comparisons:*

*Vasari Sgrs, Backhouse (12/94<sup>R</sup>, 4/04) (SIGN) SIGCD503*

*Sixteen, Christophers (9/96<sup>R</sup>) (CORO) COR16029*

*Westminster Cath Ch, O'Donnell (3/98) (HYPE) CDA67017*

## Monteverdi

'La dolce vita'

Baci soavi e cari. Il ballo delle ingrate. Come dolce hoggi l'auretta spira. Con che soavità. Confitebor tibi Domine. Dolcissimo uscignolo. L'incoronazione di Poppea – Sento un certo non so che. Io son pur vezzosetta. Lamento d'Arianna. Lamento della Ninfa. Laudate Dominum. O bone Jesu, o piissime Jesu. Orfeo – Ballo. La piaga c'ho nel core. Se vittorie, si belle. Si dolce è il tormento. Vespers – Nigra sum. Zefiro torna

**Dorothee Miels** *sop*

**Lautten Compagny / Wolfgang Katschner**

Deutsche Harmonia Mundi © 88985 49157-2 (79' • DDD • T/t)



This delectable collection of Monteverdi for soprano and ensemble

is titled 'La dolce vita', and while it's a perfect fit for these impossibly lively, light-footed and vivacious performances by Dorothee Miels and Wolfgang Katschner's Lautten Compagny, it speaks to the weakness of this otherwise delightful recital. Monteverdi's musical world is one painted in primary colours; life may be ecstatic or tragic but it is never merely sweet. And while Miels and her collaborators give us plenty of pleasure, they rarely find the emotional friction of that pleasure-in-pain that is at the core of so much of this repertoire, whether sacred or secular.

Karl Böhmer's elegant booklet note guides us to a more accurate description of an eclectic programme that draws on not only the composer's solo madrigals but also his *Selva morale* motets, *Vespers*, choral madrigals and operas: love sacred and profane. Often this magpie approach involves an element of musical adjustment or reworking for these forces. We get a

*Lamento della Ninfa* with the shepherds' interjections taken (very expressively) by a trio of solo strings, while the duet *Zefiro torna* becomes a giddy solo with a cornett supplying the imitative second part. Whether Damigella and Valletto's dialogue 'Sento un certo non so che' from *Poppea* works quite as well for a single voice is debatable; but so irrepressibly, itchy urgent are the instrumental interludes, their eroticism cutting against the chaste prettiness of Miels's solo line, that the inclusion is a welcome one.

The instrumental contributions throughout are a real highlight – whether the lovely interventions from a pair of solo violins in 'Si dolce e il tormento', the vibrant Ballo from *Orfeo* or a vividly characterised fragment from *Il ballo delle ingrate* – and Miels's artless delivery makes for an attractive and infinitely listenable recital, even if musical passions never quite glow red-hot. **Alexandra Coghlan**

## Monteverdi · Cavalli · Piccinini

'Messa a quattro voci et salmi di 1650, Vol 2'

**Cavalli** *Salve regina* **Monteverdi** *Messa a quattro voci. Dixit Dominus II. Laetatus sum. Laudate Dominum. Confitebor tibi I. Lauda Jerusalem. Nisi Dominus* **Piccinini** *Ciaccona in G* **The Sixteen / Harry Christophers** *Coro* © COR16160 (67' • DDD • T/t)



Monteverdi published two monumental collections of church music during his

lifetime (in 1610 and 1641), but these must have been the tip of the proverbial iceberg. It seems that a vast amount of music composed for Venice across nearly 30 years is lost, but an assortment was printed posthumously by Alessandro Vincenti in *Messa a quattro voci et salmi* (1650). The Sixteen and Harry Christophers complete their two-volume survey of the entire book with impeccable performances of six Vesper psalms and the Mass for Four Voices.

The latter was recorded many moons ago by an earlier incarnation of the choir (Hyperion, 1/87), and Christophers's approach now transmits all sorts of leaner, more sharply focused and declamatory elements – not least pivotal continuo realisations of theorbo, harp and organ firmly at the forefront and a significantly lower pitch giving the music richer sonorities. The serene *Kyrie*, *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei* are contrasted with animated vigour and rhythmical impetus in the

*Gloria*, *Sanctus* and *Credo* – this is not conventionally archaic *stile antico* but instead brims with declamatory rhetoric not that different from some of the extraordinary psalm settings also featured here. Pairs of solo sopranos, tenors and basses sing beguiling dialogues with violins, (uncredited) trombones and bassoon in *Laetatus sum*, the basses Stuart Young and Jimmy Holliday exult resonantly in *Laudate Dominum* (the conjectural second bass part added by Peter Holman) and Elin Manahan Thomas's supple fluency in *Confitebor tibi Domine* has rapturous synergy with the violinists Simon Jones and Andrea Jones.

For good measure Christophers throws in an eloquent *Salve regina* by Cavalli from *Musiche sacre* (1656) sung by an all-male choir. According to my reckoning, this puts The Sixteen tantalisingly close to having recorded all of Monteverdi's extant church music. **David Vickers**

## Mozart

'Masonic Works – Cantatas and Funeral Music' *Dir, Seele des Weltalls, K429<sup>a</sup>. Die ihr des unermesslichen Weltalls Schöpfer ehrt, K619<sup>b</sup>. Ihr unsre neuen Leiter, K484<sup>c</sup>. Laut verkünde unsre Freude, K623<sup>d</sup>. Lied zur Gesellenreise, K468<sup>e</sup>. Lobgesang auf die feierliche Johannisloge, K148<sup>f</sup>. Masonic Funeral Music (Meistermusik), K477<sup>g</sup>. Die Maurerfreude, K471<sup>h</sup>. Thamos, König in Ägypten, K345 – entr'actes<sup>i</sup>. Zerfließet heut', geliebte Brüder, K483<sup>c</sup>*

abcedfgh **John Heuzenroeder** *ten* <sup>d</sup>**Mario Borgia** *bass*

bf **Alexander Puliaev** *fp* <sup>ace</sup>**Willi Kronenberg** *org*

adghi **Cologne Academy** <sup>acdgh</sup>**Choir and Orchestra /**

**Michael Alexander Willens**

BIS © BIS2294 (74' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



With one exception, Mozart's works for Masonic functions are among his most

neglected. True, they are mainly occasional works, often with texts that hardly set the pulse racing, but there are some real hidden gems, especially among the larger-scale works.

The classic recording, under the guidance of István Kertész (Decca, 10/69), is now 50 years old and rather shows its age in the odd shifts of acoustic between larger and smaller works, cruelly revealed by digital sound. The new disc – of a slightly different selection of works – revels in fine BIS sound and the organ for the songs thus accompanied is more reasonably scaled (and tootles along terrifically). The tenor John Heuzenroeder matches and even surpasses Werner Krenn (for Kertész) in ardency, although Tom Krause was luxury





Hidden gems: Michael Alexander Willens directs the Cologne Academy in a selection of Mozart's Masonic music

casting on the older disc, leaving Mario Borgioni somewhat standing.

The gems include the cantatas *Die Maurerfreude*, with virtuoso solos for oboe and clarinet, and the lusty *Laut verkünde unsre Freude*, Mozart's last completed work, written during composition of the Requiem and conducted by the composer in a period of remission from his final illness. The masterpiece, however, is the *Masonic Funeral Music*, and here Kertesz trumps Willens, who opts for a hypothetical version with male choir intoning the central Lamentations chant, as reconstructed by Philippe Autexier in the 1980s and championed by Philippe Herreweghe (Harmonia Mundi, 9/92). Kertesz, on the other hand, performs what is supposedly the 'third version', untexted but complete with three basset-horns and contrabassoon, and heroic horncalls that could rouse a Valkyrie to flight. Also included here, although not specifically Masonic, are four *Sturm und Drang* entr'actes from the incidental music to *Thamos, König in Ägypten*, played with requisite fire.

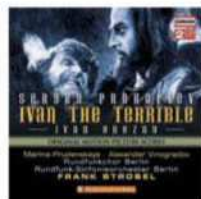
Quite apart from the pleasure this music gives, one spots premonitions in much of it of later styles: some of the choral music audibly sits between the Salzburg 'church'

style of, say, the *Coronation Mass* and the darker tone of the Requiem, while the songs especially find their verse structures echoed in *The Magic Flute* – the Masonic work par excellence. Recommended with a handshake. **David Threasher**

## Prokofiev

*Ivan the Terrible*, Op 116 – complete film score

**Anne Bretschneider** *sop* **Marina Prudenskaya**,  
**Judith Simonis**, **Roksolana Chraniuk** *contrs*  
**Alexander Vinogradov** *bass* **Berlin Radio Choir**  
**and Symphony Orchestra / Frank Strobel**  
Capriccio ㉔ C5311 (127' • DDD • T/t)



Purists immune to the charms of Martha Argerich and Sergei Babayan's Prokofiev

for Two (see page 65) might prefer the present issue. Frank Strobel gives us an 'authentic' stop-start realisation of Prokofiev's *Ivan the Terrible* music with vamp-until-ready connective tissue and noises off. It's his own edition, primarily intended for playing live alongside Sergey Eisenstein's two-part cinematic masterpiece. Indeed, Strobel premiered the score this way on September 16, 2016, at

the Musikfest Berlin, just after completing Capriccio's studio sessions. He thus offers more material than Vladimir Fedoseyev (Nimbus, 2/01) or Valéry Polyansky (Chandos) whose own would-be comprehensive renderings rely on the 100-minute version published by Hans Sikorski in 1997.

Sonically speaking this Berlin-made production is certainly up to the job and its conductor has a whole series of comparable restorations under his belt, including a 'complete' *Alexander Nevsky* (Capriccio, 1/05). More analytical listening may be frustrated by shortcomings in the supporting documentation. Trilingual notes fail to clarify why the running order is as it is or even the authorship of what's included. One option is to wallow. The chorus is placed in a suitably resonant acoustic for the Orthodox liturgical element curtailed in rival accounts and Marina Prudenskaya, fresh from her Royal Opera House debut as Azucena (*Il trovatore*), has a deep-pile, obviously Slav instrument. Like the more familiar Muscovite bass, Alexander Vinogradov, she seems perfect casting. Only the instrumentals lack a certain Soviet heft.

There are many abridged options. Riccardo Muti has been a consistent

champion of the once mandatory oratorio assembled by Abram Stasevich (EMI, 4/78), while Valery Gergiev is among those offering a halfway-house selection based on Stasevich but without linking narration (Philips, 2/98). Curiously we still await a recording of the tighter Levon Atovmian score first championed by Vladimir Jurowski. On the present CDs, as with so many Russian films, the bells do a lot of tolling and you're in for the long haul.

David Gutman

## Ricchezza • Veneziano

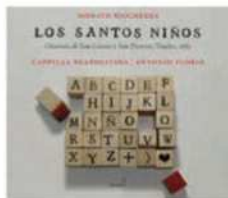
**Ricchezza** Los Santos Niños: Oratorio di San Giusto e San Pastore. La gara degli elementi - La pietà di goccia ardente **Veneziano** San Antonio di Padova - Sinfonia. Il Tobia sposo - Sinfonia

**Federica Pagliuca** *sop* **Marta Fumagalli** *contr*

**Luca Cervoni** *ten* **Giuseppe Naviglio** *bass*

**Cappella Neapolitana** / **Antonio Florio**

Glossa Ⓢ GCD922610 (63' • DDD • T/t)



Antonio Florio and his enterprising accomplices continue to mine

the rich seams of forgotten Neapolitan Baroque composers. Donato Ricchezza (c1650-1722) worked at several of the city's conservatories and the viceroy's Real Cappella, and in 1680 was appointed *maestro di cappella* at Naples' Girolamini church. The *Oratorio di San Giusto e San Pastore* (1683) is a story about two Spanish children martyred in about 303-04 during the persecutions of the early Christians by the emperor Diocletian. Dinko Fabris's erudite note suggests that the oratorio may have been connected to the departure of the Spanish viceroy, the Marqués of Astorga, whose family claimed lineage from the supposed uncle of the martyrs.

The oratorio is essentially an extended trial scene set to fluent music of contrapuntal elegance and appositely varying dramatic moods for all four participants. The two young children apply their impressive scholasticism and theological sureness to steadfastly dispel bullying attempts by an unnamed soldier and the governor to persuade them to renounce their faith; the virtuous wisdom of the boys confounds their irked persecutors. The boys are characterised with dignity and purity by Marta Fumagalli and Federica Pagliuca, whereas the unappeasable belligerence and slyness of their accusers are conveyed astutely by Giuseppe Naviglio and Luca Cervoni.

Using single strings with a rich group of plucked continuo, Florio ensures a flowing momentum to the narrative. The parts of the oratorio are both preceded by sinfonias from oratorios by Veneziano (a fellow pupil of Provenzale), and exquisite string ritornellos are also a prominent feature of a profoundly beautiful afterpiece, the mournful passacaglia 'La pietà di goccia ardente' from Ricchezza's oratorio *La gara degli elementi*, sung plaintively by Fumagalli.

David Vickers

## Schein • Schütz

'Larmes de Résurrection'

**Schein** Israelis Brünnlein - excs **Schütz** Historia der Auferstehung Jesu Christi, SWV50

**La Tempête** / **Simon-Pierre Bestion**

Alpha Ⓢ ALPHA394 (77' • DDD • T/t)



Following his intriguing Machaut/Stravinsky Mass pairing (5/17),

Simon-Pierre Bestion offers us a *Resurrection History* similarly recontextualised, associating it with selections from Johann Hermann Schein's *Israelis Brünnlein*, which cut across it at regular intervals. Only purists, I think, would object to the resulting disruption of Schütz's narrative: with fine accounts of the *Resurrection History* to choose from (for example Paul Hillier's with Ars Nova - Dacapo, 6/10), there is surely space, as with Machaut's Mass, for new approaches. (The same goes for *Israelis Brünnlein*, which exists complete from Cantus Cölln - Deutsche Harmonia Mundi - among others.)

In any case, Bestion rules himself out of direct comparison in other ways, allowing other instrumental consorts (beyond the usual viols) to take up the accompaniment at certain points, or making cuts to Schütz's text. Again, some listeners will feel they are better served elsewhere; but the ensemble is of a quality sufficient to quell the doubts even of Cleophas (the selections from *Israelis Brünnlein* alone are worth the price of admission). Having recently regretted a certain sameness in recorded performances of this repertory, it would be churlish of me not to applaud a recording that does something different, and does it so well.

If there is a cloud over the proceedings, it is Bestion's choice of Evangelist. Georges Abdallah is a cantor in the Byzantine tradition, and ornaments his part accordingly. This springs not directly from an espousal of the 'oriental hypothesis', as it has been called when applied to earlier periods, but from Bestion's not unrelated

desire to defamiliarise the story. Whether this works as well with Schütz as with plainchant is debatable, but Abdallah's diction is so audibly Gallic (or non-Germanic, anyway) that it's that much harder to suspend disbelief. And on the rare but remarkable occasions where his part deviates from its usual corseted cast, intonation and tone lose their focus (try the beginning of track 18). Whether this amounts to miscalculation is a moot point but it dampens enjoyment of what is otherwise an inspired project. **Fabrice Fitch**

## Vaughan Williams

Mass in G minor. Five Mystical Songs - Antiphon.

Lord, thou hast been our refuge<sup>a</sup>. O, clap your hands. O taste and see. O vos omnes. Prayer to the Father of Heaven. Rhosymedre. Te Deum in G

**Choir of St John's College, Cambridge** /

**Andrew Nettsingha** with

<sup>a</sup>**David Blackadder** *tpt* **Joseph Wicks** *org*

Signum Ⓢ SIGCD541 (68' • DDD • T/t)



'O radiant Luminary': composers down the ages have attempted to catch light in music,

but the opening of *Prayer to the Father of Heaven* is surely one of the most succinct and total successes. Dating from 1948, it's one of the last works on a collection that lays stress on the composer as mystic visionary, in terms both of repertoire and performance.

Later still is *O taste and see*, less than 70 years old, and yet its opening line could have been written at any time during the last 500 years - or so it seems in the unaffected simplicity of Alfred Harrison's delivery. Without undue resonance or blurred harmonies, the recording has plenty of air: there's a remote, untouchable quality to *O vos omnes*, attributable partly to the modal writing, partly also to a sense of distance between choir and microphones.

The choir sounds smaller (though it isn't) than on its previous recording, of Masses by Poulenc and Kodály (1/18). This is to advantage at moments such as the pick-up of energy for 'Cum Sancto Spiritu' in the *Gloria* of the Mass, the timeless heterophony of the *Sanctus* and the Tudor part-writing of the *Agnus*. Elsewhere there is a loss of impact: travel back to New Year's Day 1970 via the choir's website (search for 'SJC Live') and you'll hear the men of St John's filling the chapel with George Herbert's cry of joy ('Let all the world') even if half of them were singing with hangovers.





Vaughan Williams as mystic visionary: the Choir of St John's College, Cambridge, demonstrate the composer's place in the English choral tradition

Their successors strain every sinew but to less effect.

Three other Cambridge choirs have recently recorded *Lord, thou hast been our refuge* within mixed thematic albums, and they all make a sharper distinction between the semi-chorus singing Psalm 90 and the numinous echo of 'O God our help in ages past'; curiously, only the choir of Jesus includes the score's opening unison A (Signum), and the luxury casting of Alison Balsom for the final trumpet descant lends unrivalled splendour to the King's account (King's College Records, 6/15). Even so, this masterful fusion of psalm setting, verse anthem and chorale fantasia is the right and only way to set the seal on a demonstration of Vaughan Williams's particular place in the English choral tradition as an atheist devoted to the continued value of liturgical music. **Peter Quantrill**

## 'The Road Home'

**JK Atwood** Unclouded Day (arr Shawn Kirchner) **Bradbury** Angel Band (arr Kirchner) **Fain** I'll be seeing you (arr Phil Mattson) **Guillaume** Dominus vobiscum **Kirchner** I'll be on my way **Lauridsen** Mid-Winter Songs - Intercession in Late October; Lament for Pasiphaë; Mid-Winter Waking **Paulus** The Road Home **Runestad** Reflections **Traditional** Deal

gently with thy servants. Encouragement. The Lark. The Nightingale's Song **W Walker** Hallelujah (arr Kirchner) **Webster** In the sweet by and by (arr Aaron Humble) **Santa Fe Desert Chorale / Joshua Habermann** with **Jeff Lankov** pf Avie © AV2377 (60' • DDD • T/t)



In the (admittedly unlikely) scenario that an alien landed on earth and demanded to be brought up to speed on contemporary American choral repertoire, he could do a lot worse than spend an hour with the Santa Fe Desert Chorale's 'The Road Home'. Joshua Habermann's excellent ensemble are style chameleons, gamely tacking everything here from traditional Shaker hymns to smoochy gospel arrangements, astringent contemporary classical motets to anthemic, contemporary-spirituals, and performing them all with full-wattage brilliance and brio.

While some American groups favour a European delivery, this is choral singing that's unapologetically American. Vowels are bright and broad, tone fuzzy-warm and delivery coloured by the little swoops and

guttural kicks of gospel. Habermann has pulled off that trickiest of balancing acts and created a choir of soloists also capable of seamless ensemble blend.

If the former is evident in the many attractive Shaker arrangements, it's the latter that carries the affirmative homophony of 'Angel Band' from Shawn Kirchner's *Three American Songs* and Stephen Paulus's contemporary choral classic *The Road Home*, gilding their folksy-familiar harmonies with a soft-focus glow. There's neat contrapuntal dexterity in the third (and most successful) of Kirchner's arrangements, 'Hallelujah', and Sydney Guillaume's lovely *Dominus vobiscum*, its stylistic debt to the current Baltic rather than American tradition.

But, while the Chorale's delivery is absolutely consistent, that's not as true of the music itself. Jake Runestad's *Reflections*, commissioned by the choir, is an anonymous affair, Phil Mattson's arrangement of 'I'll be seeing you' obliterates the song's sepia sentimentality in the glare of his too-earnest reworking, and the obligatory Lauridsen – three movements from his *Mid-Winter Songs* – are hardly vintage.

This musical road may eventually lead us home, but takes some unnecessary detours along the way. **Alexandra Coghlan**

# WHAT NEXT?

Do you have a favourite piece of classical music and want to explore further? Our monthly feature suggests some musical journeys that venture beyond the most familiar works, with some recommended versions. This month **James Jolly**'s point of departure is ...

## *Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 6, 'Pathétique' (1893)*

One of the great Russian symphonies and a work of terrific power and emotional weight, the impetus for Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* remains enigmatic. Was it a kind of musical suicide note (a theory, now largely rebutted, set running by Alexandra Orlova in 1979) or was it something more universal, another meditation on Fate? The composer himself admitted that the work had something of the requiem about it, and its intensity, combined with the fact that Tchaikovsky died just nine days after conducting the work's premiere, invite many different theories. Then there's the seemingly final (and applause-inducing) chords of the third movement, only to be succeeded by a finale of

desolation, its almost whispered end hinting at oblivion. Maybe the mystery of its creation adds to its power.

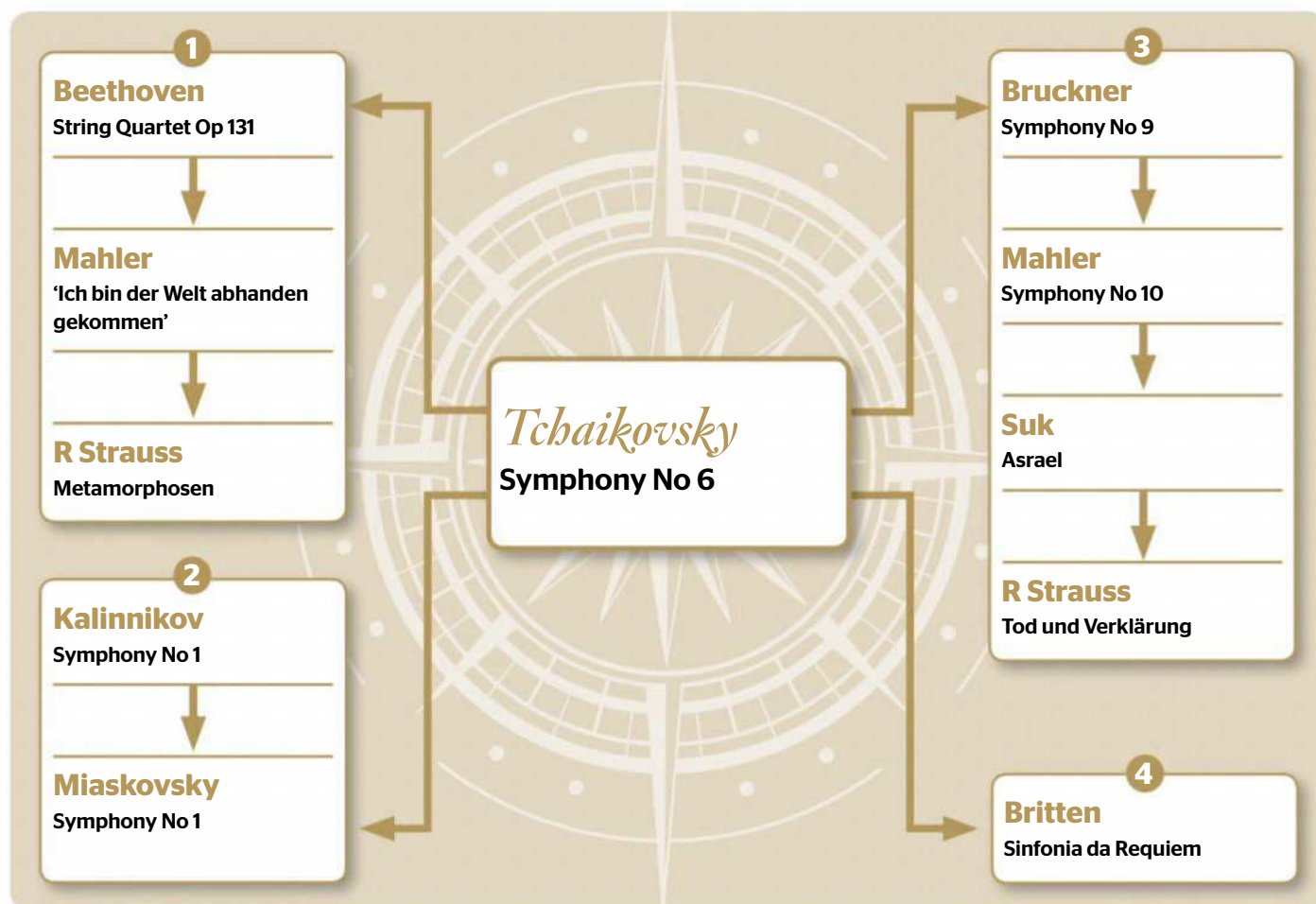
The *Pathétique* is a multifaceted work which – inspired by Teodor Currentzis's new recording – suggests four different journeys.

● MusicAeterna / Currentzis (Sony Classical)

### 1 *Heart on sleeve*

**Beethoven** String Quartet in C sharp minor, Op 131 (1826)

This is abstract music at its most undefinable and, like the Tchaikovsky, operates at a level far above any kind of earthbound narrative.





Unconventionally presented in seven movements, Beethoven's Op 131 sits among the late quartets, works that challenge the form. Its range and ambition led many later composers to despair: Schubert wondered how he could possibly write a string quartet again, while Schumann was lost for words. Its message seems to be the human quest for some kind of spiritual domain that keeps eluding us, yet it ends in a mood of consolation, its very humanity offering peace and calm.

● The Lindsays (ASV)

### **Mahler Rückert-Lieder - 'Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen' (1901)**

This extraordinary song – perhaps the greatest Mahler ever wrote – seems to draw on the sense of isolation explored in 'Um Mitternacht' (another song in the cycle) and anatomises it to create something more universal. 'I am dead to the world's tumult', Rückert says, and Mahler's music lifts the text into music of almost out-of-body peace, not unlike the destination of Beethoven's Op 131.

● Baker; New Philharmonia / Barbirolli (Warner Classics)

**R Strauss Metamorphosen (1946)** The destruction of the Vienna State Opera House by allied bombing in March 1945 may well have provided the impetus for this Paul Sacher-commissioned work for 23 solo strings. Weaving in a quotation from the funeral march of Beethoven's *Eroica*, the work can be seen as an elegy for the destruction of German culture (many major opera houses were razed to the ground), but others have suggested a more philosophical interpretation. As pure music, though, it's a powerful and compact work that can't fail to move.

● Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Karajan (DG)

## **2 Melodic richness from Russia**

**Kalinnikov Symphony No 1 (1895)** If the big melodies of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* push your buttons, then do try Vasily Kalinnikov's First Symphony: it has a glorious melody in the first movement (repeated in the finale) that will stick with you for days. Kalinnikov was admired by Tchaikovsky and recommended for a job by him, but the tuberculosis that would cut him down aged only 35 prevented him from taking up the post. This symphony is his best-known work and a real treasure.

● USSR SO / Svetlanov (Alto et al)

**Myaskovsky Symphony No 1 (1908)** It was a performance of the *Pathétique*, conducted by Artur Nikisch in 1896, that inspired Nikolai Myaskovsky to become a composer. Described by many as the Father of the Soviet Symphony (he'd write 27 between 1908 and '49), his three-movement First Symphony is very much in the traditional mould, with big melodies and rich, plush orchestration. Long, bass-dominated lines characterise the powerful first movement, the central *Larghetto* sings soulfully and the finale has a galumphing charm. Well worth hearing.

● State Academic SO of Russia / Svetlanov (Warner Classics)

## **3 Music of Farewell**

**Bruckner Symphony No 9 (1896)** Left incomplete at Bruckner's death, this three-movement work is, like Schubert's *Unfinished*, complete in its incompleteness. Powerful and measured, its finale was described by the composer as a 'farewell to life', and its long-breathed string textures perhaps prefigure a language that Mahler would exploit to powerful effect in his slow movements. In a great performance, it's overwhelming.

● Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Karajan (DG)

**Mahler Symphony No 10 (1910)** Another unfinished symphony, Mahler left the work in short score almost from start to end, with the opening *Adagio* left closest to a performing state. Deryck Cooke made an edition that has become a repertoire work, championed by the likes of Rattle,



Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky's grave in the Tikhvin Cemetery, St Petersburg

Chailly and Harding. Mahler's most tonally advanced composition, this is a work that seems to glimpse into the future, evoking a world of devastation and despair. Its power is undeniable and provides a tantalising view of what the world lost when Mahler died aged just 50.

● Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Rattle (Warner Classics)

**Suk Asrael (1907)** The subject of this month's 'Gramophone Collection' (page 108), Suk's symphony was prompted by the deaths of both Dvořák and Suk's wife, Otilie. Its emotional span is very broad and the work culminates in a mood of consolation that, like Beethoven's Op 131, seems to be glimpsed in a place beyond man's day-to-day experience.

● Czech Philharmonic Orchestra / Mackerras (Naxos)

**R Strauss Tod und Verklärung (1889)** It might be odd for a young man of 25 to be drawn to portraying an artist's death, but Strauss achieves this ambitious vision of the end-of-life experience ('Death and Transfiguration') with remarkable concentration. More overtly programmatic than any of the other pieces recommended here, it reveals the youthful Strauss's masterly control of the orchestra.

● Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Karajan (DG)

## **4 A modern masterpiece**

**Britten Sinfonia da Requiem (1940)** Another youthful work – Britten was 26 – but with a maturity and confidence that still astonishes. Commissioned by the Japanese government to mark the 2600th anniversary of the founding of the Emperor of Japan, it was rejected because of its use of a Catholic title, Latin movement names and its sombre mood. But it was a success at its premiere and has become a powerful example of the composer's purely orchestral output. Written in the midst of war, it has a fierce intensity that speaks of deep personal and political beliefs challenged by uncontrollable external events.

● London Symphony Orchestra / Hickox (Chandos)

Available to stream at Qobuz, Apple Music and Spotify

# Opera



## Mark Pullinger gets reacquainted with a modern *Così fan tutte*:

*'The curtain rises on the Crush Bar as the girls check out photos of their boyfriends on their iPhones'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 87**



## Neil Fisher listens to a spirited account of Verdi's *Luisa Miller*:

*'Ivan Magrì reportedly took lessons from Pavarotti, and there's an open-throated sound in the young tenor's ringing tone'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 90**

## Von Einem

®

### Der Besuch der alten Dame

**Christa Ludwig** *mez* ..... Claire Zachanassian  
**Eberhard Waechter** *bar* ..... Alfred III  
**Heinz Zednik** *ten* ..... Butler  
**Hans Beirer** *ten* ..... Mayor  
**Manfred Jungwirth** *bass* ..... Priest  
**Hans Hotter** *bass-bar* ..... Teacher  
**Chorus and Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera / Horst Stein**

Orfeo ® ② C930 182I (123' • ADD)

Recorded live, May 23, 1971

Includes synopsis



In the late 1950s or '60s, if you were studying for A level, the

tragicomedy *The Visit of the Old Lady* by the Swiss writer Friedrich Dürrenmatt may well have been the first contemporary play in German that you read. A slightly surreal, progressively more frightening plot has the titular heroine Claire Zachanassian (a catch-all of the rich-man names Zaharoff, Onassis and Gulbenkian) returning in her now millionaire old age to seek revenge on the little town of Gullen (the name means 'liquid manure'), where she was made pregnant and an outcast as a young girl. The man responsible was her lover, local shopkeeper and would-be mayor Alfred III. Claire will gift the town and its inhabitants 'a billion' to recover their failing economy if they will have III killed and let her take him away in the coffin she has brought with her.

This classic moral dilemma (spoiler alert) has the townfolk yielding to their basest instincts, like German literature's other satirical targets of the economic 'miracle' of the time. The Swiss-born Austrian Gottfried von Einem (whose centenary falls this year) wanted it to put alongside his other classic takeovers of Büchner and Kafka. After some wrangling Dürrenmatt agreed and volunteered a libretto himself, a verbally faithful yet compressed version of his play. At the start of the 1970s the

composer's potential cast list carefully matched, experience- and age-wise, the leading artist roster of the Vienna State Opera. It could provide a star vehicle for Christa Ludwig (touchingly keen to point out in a note of her own here that she was then nowhere near Zachanassian's age) and parts of substance for Eberhard Waechter as her victim Alfred and Hans Hotter as the Teacher.

There is a drawback, however, just listening. (This recording is of the world premiere broadcast, previously issued on DG LPs and subsequently on Amadeo.) The panoply of scene changes – railway station, town shop, town hall, woodland, farmer's barn, all of them intentionally parodistic of German Romantic scenery – is not so strongly conveyed to the ear. Von Einem's music chases Dürrenmatt's scene-setting most (almost too) faithfully with colourful, often loud tone-painting. The setting of the vocal lines is recitative-dominated and it is hard to get near to a heroine who appears so much in brief laconic conversation. Ludwig's part does not have the written brio of a woman who is carried around on a chair by two gangsters, accompanied by two blind eunuchs and a panther. Only in the second scene in the Konradsweller Wood do we get some musical contact with von Einem's Claire Z. Similarly there is little music – aside from a romantic theme which attaches itself as background to the edgily nostalgic scenes for Claire and Alfred in the wood – which implants a clear aural image of a drama in an audience's mind. Using an actual spoken play as a supposed guarantee of closer contact with the spectator can reduce – as it did in other operas of the same decade – the composer's role to that of film-music accompanist.

The performance sounds well-organised (by conductor Stein) and fluent with well-honed contributions from Ludwig (some vertiginous top notes included), Waechter, Hotter and Beirer. The lack of a libretto in Orfeo's release is a serious error. Dürrenmatt's *Visit* has been made also

into films and a musical; now we need to see his own opera collaboration on screen at home. **Mike Ashman**

## Giordano



### Fedora

**Daniela Dessì** *sop* ..... Fedora Romanov  
**Fabio Armiliato** *ten* ..... Loris Ipanov  
**Daria Kovalenko** *sop* ..... Olga Sukarev  
**Alfonso Antoniozzi** *bar* ..... De Sirieux  
**Margherita Rotondi** *mez* ..... Dimitri  
**Roberto Maletta** *bar* ..... Gretch  
**Chorus and Orchestra of Teatro Carlo Felice, Genoa / Valerio Galli**

Stage director **Rosetta Cucchi**

Video director **Matteo Ricchetti**

Dynamic ® ② CDS7772; ® DVD 37772;

® 57772 (108' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA5.1, DD5.1 & PCM stereo • O • S)

Recorded live, March 2015

Includes synopsis



When Daniela Dessì died in August 2016, the opera world lost an Italian *spinto* in the old-school mould.

This Blu-ray recorded just under a year and a half earlier gives some idea of what she could deliver. Her performance displays powerful, authentically tangy tone, rock-solid technique and a touching stage presence. There's some squalliness at the top of the voice, admittedly, but this is a timely reminder of a fine artist.

Alas, though, her performance is not always matched by the rest of the production. Rosetta Cucchi's staging aims for something both traditional and modern, with an 'older Loris' onstage throughout and scenes, played out behind a glass screen, showing us war and its aftermath – the battle tableau we see during the jolly Act 2 Prelude is no doubt designed to create a thought-provoking contrast but struck me as merely incongruous.

Otherwise the cast seem largely to have been allowed to get on with their thing.





Juan Diego Flórez (right) stars as Massenet's lovesick Werther in a new production from Zurich – see review on page 86

Dessì is grand and noble in time-honoured tradition; Fabio Armiliato chews the scenery and beats his chest in no less time-honoured tradition as Loris, one of *verismo*'s less grown-up and endearing tenor characters. Armiliato's singing is not high on subtlety, with plenty of swoops and sobs thrown in for good measure, but there's certainly no doubting his commitment; and the final scene between him and Dessì – the couple were married – no doubt gains a new emotional dimension.

Daria Kovalenko's spunky Olga and the impressive bass Roberto Maietta as Gretch are the pick of the rest of the cast. Valerio Galli conducts the orchestra well enough but can't elicit anything like the warmth or lyricism the score – a more intimate affair than Giordano's breakthrough *Andrea Chénier* – calls for.

Dynamic's production is not ideal, either. The camera direction is keen to make sure we don't forget about 'Older Loris', while the sound quality is worryingly variable, not least when it comes to Armiliato, who often seems to be singing in a different acoustic and who rarely seems to be totally in sync with what we hear. **Hugo Shirley**

## Heuberger

### Der Opernball

Gerhard Ernst *bar* ..... Theofil Beaubuisson  
 Lotte Marquardt *contr* ..... Palmira Beaubuisson  
 Alexander Kaimbacher *ten* ..... Henri  
 Ivan Oreščanin *ten* ..... Paul Aubier  
 Nadja Mchantaf *sop* ..... Angèle Aubier  
 Martin Fournier *ten* ..... Georges Duménil  
 Margareta Klobučar *sop* ..... Marguérite Duménil  
 Sieglinde Feldhofer *sop* ..... Hortense  
 János Mischuretz *ten* ..... Philippe  
 Chorus of Opera Graz; Graz Philharmonic  
 Orchestra / Marius Burkert  
 CPO © 2 CPO555 070-2 (86' • DDD)  
 Includes synopsis and German libretto



At last! Anyone fascinated by *fin de siècle* Vienna will have heard of Richard

Heuberger: friend of Brahms and outspoken champion of Schoenberg and his disciples. And anyone who loves operetta will know of *Der Opernball* (1898), whose dashing overture was orchestrated (if Karl Kraus is to be believed) by Zemlinsky, and whose waltz-song 'Im Chambre séparée' is a staple of operetta lollipop albums by everyone from Anna

Netrebko to Harry Secombe. You've probably wondered if the rest of *Der Opernball* is anything like as good.

Until now, though, you'll have had little chance of finding out, because so far as I can establish this is the first complete recording in at least 50 years. Victor Léon's libretto is a feather-light mash-up of *Die Fledermaus* and *Così fan tutte*: two wives and their chambermaid Hortense test the fidelity of their menfolk by inviting each of them to meet a mysterious stranger at the Paris Opera Ball – she'll be wearing a pink domino. All three women attend the ball, all in pink dominoes; and you can probably guess the rest. So far, so escapist, and operetta buffs like to debate whether *Der Opernball* was the last masterpiece of Strauss and Suppé's 'golden age' or the prototype for the 'silver age' of Lehár and Kálmán. For me, Heuberger's melodic freshness and the sparkle in his eye place *Der Opernball* firmly in the Strauss tradition – carefree rather than nostalgic, and all the more life-affirming for it.

Still, the days are long gone when you could expect a major operetta recording to feature singers like Nicolai Gedda or Julia Varady. CPO has recorded a production at the Graz Opera; and while the cast isn't

exactly starry (and none of them sounds entirely comfortable at the top of their register), they are at least a team: playing off each other and using their voices to create character – whether Ivan Oreščanin's enjoyably bluff Paul or Margareta Klobučar's bright, slightly twangy soprano as Marguérite.

Alexander Kaimbacher's lightweight tenor is pleasantly suited to the sea cadet Henri and, as his beloved Hortense, Sieglinde Feldhofer has a warm, rather plangent soprano that gives the character an appealing sweetness. Together, they lean so gracefully into 'Im Chambre séparée' that you scarcely realise it's coming – a tribute to the Viennese style of conductor Marius Burkert. A regular at the Bad Ischl Lehár Festival, he knows exactly how light a touch this music needs, and cast and orchestra respond with alertness and grace. In these circumstances, the lack of spoken dialogue, the short running time of each disc and CPO's desultory presentation (they supply libretto translations for Zandonai and Goldmark: why not for Heuberger?) can just about be forgiven. Gold or silver? Either way, *Der Opernball* is a treasure. **Richard Bratby**

## Massenet

### Werther

**Juan Diego Flórez** *ten* ..... Werther  
**Anna Stéphany** *mez* ..... Charlotte  
**Audun Iversen** *bar* ..... Albert  
**Mélissa Petit** *sop* ..... Sophie  
**Cheyne Davidson** *bar* ..... Magistrate  
**Martin Zysset** *ten* ..... Schmidt  
**Choruses of Opera Zurich; Philharmonia Zurich / Cornelius Meister**

Stage director **Tatjana Gürbaca**

Video director **Michael Beyer**

Accentus ② DVD ACC20427; ③ ACC10427  
 (138' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1,  
 DD5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live, April 2017



Massenet's *Werther* makes for bleak viewing at the best of times. Goethe's lovesick poet stumbles around after

Charlotte (who's already spoken for) for three acts before shooting himself on Christmas Eve and taking the entire final act to die. Director Tatjana Gürbaca strips the opera back effectively in her new production for Opernhaus Zürich, captured in this well-presented Blu-ray/DVD from Accentus Music.

Klaus Grünberg's single set looks simple enough – a hermetic front room,

a cramped space panelled in Nordic blond wood – but its panels open up to reveal secrets, such as an organ console in Act 2. As Werther's world falls apart, so more panels open, revealing video snow flurries and later a swirling starfield, looming from the world beyond. I can imagine the boxed set is excellent for voices, projecting them out to the auditorium. Cornelius Meister reins in the Philharmonia Zurich at the right moments so they never swamp the singers, yet the interludes are played for all their worth.

Juan Diego Flórez's Werther is a deluded loner. He's no more than a rudimentary actor; but the pent-up poet suits the Peruvian tenor well and he tackles 'Pourquoi me réveiller?' with real aplomb. The voice has grown and darkened in recent years and his tight, slightly nasal quality, which suits his Rossini roles, is less evident here. The British mezzo Anna Stéphany sings an accomplished Charlotte, dignified, contained, her lines sensitively phrased and coloured. Audun Iversen is ever-reliable as Albert, while Mélissa Petit succeeds in making Sophie less annoying than usual, fully aware of the implications of what's unfolding.

There are some unusual directorial touches from Gürbaca. Guests from the party appear back at the house, a surreal gathering. By Act 2, the Bailli's children appear to have aged and are now pensioners, forced by Johann and Schmitt to down alcohol ... symbolic, perhaps, of how little things ever change in Wetzlar. Charlotte is already smashing up the Christmas tree baubles at the start of Act 3, causing the excellent Anna Stéphany to tread gingerly later on, when she's required to be barefoot. Albert forces a kiss on her after Werther's request to borrow his pistols is delivered. And in the final act, Charlotte cradles the dying Werther while cardigan-clad older versions of the pair – dressed in their Act 1 party costumes – cuddle up on the window sill. The latter sounds cheesy but is quite affecting, in a sentimental way. Best avoided at Yuletide though ...

**Mark Pullinger**

## Meyerbeer

### Margherita d'Anjou

**Giulia De Blasis** *sop* ..... Margherita d'Anjou  
**Arcangelo Carbotti** *ten* ..... Edoardo  
**Anton Rositskiy** *ten* ..... Duke of Lavarenne  
**Gaia Petrone** *mez* ..... Isaura  
**Laurence Meikle** *bass* ..... Carlo Belmonte  
**Marco Filippo Romano** *bar* ..... Michele Gamautte  
**Bastian Thomas Kohl** *bass* ..... Riccardo  
**Lorenzo Izzo** *sop* ..... Bellapunta

**Dielli Hoxha** *bass-bar* ..... Orner  
**Elena Tereshchenko** *sop* ..... Gertrude  
**Massimiliano Guerrieri** *bass* ..... Officer  
**Chorus of the Teatro Municipale, Piacenza;**  
**Italian International Orchestra / Fabio Luisi**  
 Stage director **Alessandro Talevi**  
 Video director **Matteo Ricchetti**  
 Dynamic ② CDS7802; ③ 37802 (161' •  
 DDD • NTSC • 16.9 • DD5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)  
 Recorded live at the Palazzo Ducale, Martina  
 Franca, Italy, July-August 2017  
 Includes synopsis



In tandem with Martina Franca's Valle d'Itria Festival, Dynamic has produced another live double (CD and DVD,

available separately) of an earlier 19th-century rarity. Meyerbeer, undertaking a kind of operatic apprenticeship in Italy on the suggestion of no less than Salieri, picked up in no time at all on the local obsession with recreating unhistorical history. His fourth Italian opera, libretto by Romani, makes fictional additions to the lives of two Wars of the Roses royals already much featured by Shakespeare – Margaret of Anjou and Richard (III).

There is another *Margherita* already in the catalogue – an elegant and well-prepared Opera Rara studio performance from 2002 under David Parry. But it's valuable now to have the opportunity actually to see how this *melodramma semiserio* can work onstage, especially when the *semiserio* is courageously given full rein. Stage director Talevi uses the topos of making old royal dynasties into modern-dress fashion houses and of having several of the arias addressed as interviews to onstage reporters. Any confusions are soon made clear, while Talevi handles the idea dramatically enough to bring one closer to the actual characters as people than a mock-medieval pageant might do. A large amount of dressing-up in view helps visually with the plot's many changes of allegiance.

The director's one actual gloss, allowing Margherita (De Blasis) to have a nervous breakdown on the lower forestage about the final loss of her beloved tenor Lavarenne (Rositskiy) as Isaura (Petrone) sings her rondo finale about being so happy, helps to anchor the end of the work as fundamentally serious. All this 'extra' visual material also helps provide a credible framework for Marco Filippo Romano's camp but caring





A deconstructed *Così fan tutte*: the 2016 Covent Garden production, conducted by Semyon Bychkov, met with mixed responses

Michele as the crossover-into-comedy character, advising on costuming and consoling the at times broken-hearted Margherita and Isaura. All these four sing bravely and well, fully into the spirit of both Meyerbeer and the staging.

As 'apprentice', Meyerbeer presents himself here as a keen student of Rossini in a work that runs uncannily similar to the senior composer's slightly later *Le comte Ory*, itself both parody of and tribute to this style of opera. Meyerbeer's fluency in writing for voices is already at a premium in the extended arias (and tessitura) for Lavarenne and Isaura – and at the other end of the vocal spectrum there is even a trio for three basses. Surely it's only a lack of really memorable melodic material, and rhythmic pointing, that keeps this first international success for the composer from our stages again today. The live recording is clearly managed and the filming tracks the action closely enough without losing the feel of an arena. Fabio Luisi keeps a relaxed hand on the proceedings and, if you are prepared for one or two vocal glitches in the brave name of 'going for it', the performance is compelling. **Mike Ashman**

Comparative version:

Parry (*A/03*) (OPRA) ORC25

## Mozart

### *Così fan tutte*

Corinne Winters *sop* ..... Fiordiligi  
 Angela Brower *mez* ..... Dorabella  
 Sabina Puértolas *sop* ..... Despina  
 Daniel Behle *ten* ..... Ferrando  
 Alessio Arduini *bar* ..... Guglielmo  
 Johannes Martin Kränzle *bar* ..... Don Alfonso  
 Chorus and Orchestra of the Royal Opera House /  
 Semyon Bychkov

Stage director Jan Philipp Gloger

Video director Rhodri Huw

Opus Arte OA1260D; OABD7237D  
 (3h 4' + 8' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1,  
 DTS5.1 & LPCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live, October 17, 2016

Extra features: Introduction to *Così fan tutte*;  
 Ben Baur talks about the designs; Cast gallery  
 Includes synopsis



Jan Philipp Gloger's production of *Così fan tutte* met with mixed responses when it was unveiled at Covent

Garden in 2016 (it returns next season), partly due to its hyperactive staging and partly down to a cast ill-matched to its conductor.

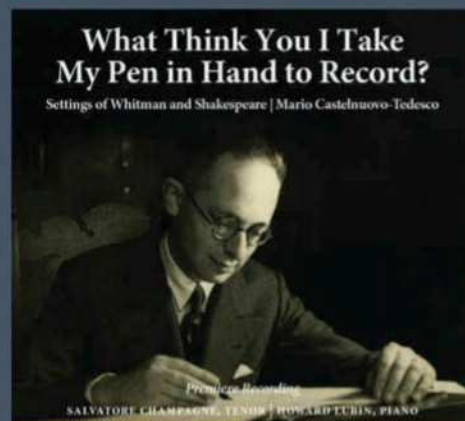
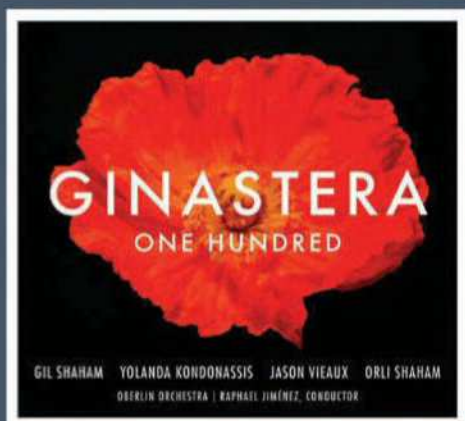
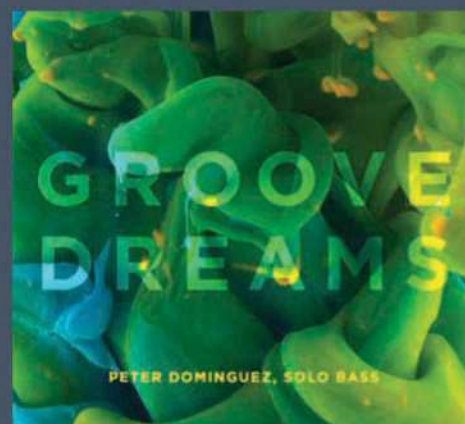
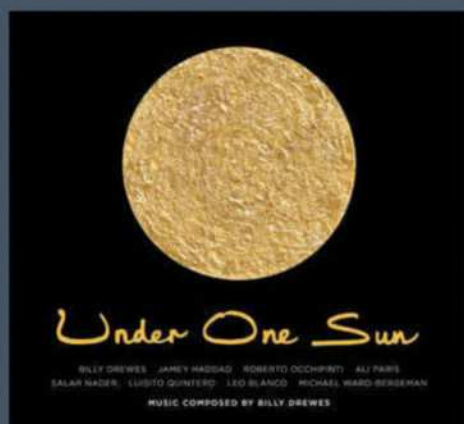
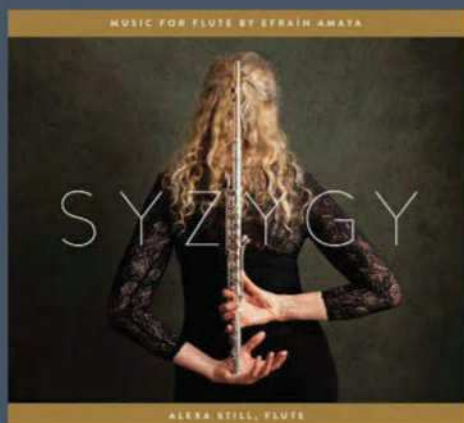
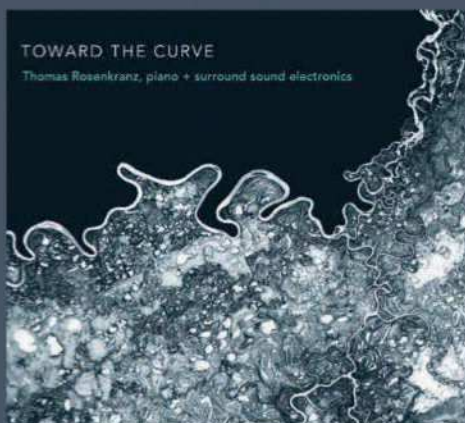
In the house, Gloger's looked like a staging that knew it was being clever and that smugness transfers to the screen on this Opus Arte Blu-ray/DVD release. Focusing more on the opera's subtitle – *The School for Lovers* – the German director presents the action as Don Alfonso conducting a social experiment, trying to test whether the two sisters can be swayed towards infidelity even though they are party to the men's wager. Gloger deconstructs *Così* from the opening bars; during the Overture, a cast – of *Così* – takes its curtain call after which two pairs of latecomers make their way through the stalls to find their seats. (At the end of an opera? Don't ask.) Don Alfonso invites them to take to the stage to test his cynical thesis. The curtain eventually rises on the ROH Crush Bar as the girls check out photos of their boyfriends on their iPhones. It's all very meta.

Johannes Martin Kränzle's slippery Alfonso guides his 'cast' through a series of scenes where backstage merges with theatre, referencing film, including a *Brief Encounter* railway station and a *Dolce vita* nightclub bar. The lovers' attempted seduction of each other's girlfriend takes place on a clumpy stage set representing the Garden of Eden, featuring



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wraparound sparkly snake. Sabina Puértolas's perky Despina is clad in a series of outlandish costumes, including bearded Old Testament prophet. A technical crew rubs shoulders with the cast as Don Alfonso's scenario plays out. Gloger's idea to emphasise that the men are just as much to blame is neatly carried out by having an electrician adjust the neon title to 'Così fan tutti', spreading the blame beyond 'all women are like that' to include the men too.

Semyon Bychkov is a splendid conductor of Strauss but he treats *Così* like *Rosenkavalier*, coating it in molten chocolate. His tempos stretch his young cast unfairly. As Fiordiligi, Corinne Winters is severely tested by the low notes and Bychkov's turgid tempo in 'Come scoglio' but her gleaming top notes in 'Per pietà' are wonderful. Angela Brower is an accomplished Dorabella, while Alessio Arduini's silky baritone makes for a smooth Guglielmo. Daniel Behle copes with the slow tempos the best to deliver a beautiful 'Un aura amorosa'.

For a classic staging, turn to Nicholas Hytner's glorious Glyndebourne production (also on Opus Arte), its wonderful cast headed by Miah Persson.

#### Mark Pullinger

Selected comparison:

I Fischer (6/07) (OPAR) DVD OA0970D;

→ OABD7035D

## Mozart

### Le nozze di Figaro

**Erich Kunz** bar ..... Figaro  
**Irmgard Seefried** sop ..... Susanna  
**Paul Schöffler** bar ..... Count Almaviva  
**Lisa Della Casa** sop ..... Countess Almaviva  
**Sena Jurinac** sop ..... Cherubino  
**Rosette Anday** mez ..... Marcellina  
**Oskar Czerwenka** bass ..... Bartolo  
**Murray Dickie** ten ..... Don Basilio  
**William Wernigh** ten ..... Don Curzio  
**Anny Felbermayer** sop ..... Barbarina  
**Walter Berry** bass-bar ..... Antonio  
**Vienna State Opera Chorus; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra / Karl Böhm**

ICA Classics/Itter Broadcast Collection mono

Ⓜ Ⓜ ② ICAC5147 (156) • ADD

Broadcast live from the Royal Festival Hall, London, September 13, 1954



The 1954 visit of the Vienna State Opera to London's Royal Festival Hall with a Mozart/da Ponte cycle on improvised sets was so praised by most critics that a

reaction soon set in. Was it really that good, or really genuinely a Viennese house cast? The answer to the latter question was certainly no – it was a special touring assembly. And to the former, now we finally have some aural evidence? By no means consistently.

Böhm's quirkily uneven tempos for this opera are pretty much the same here as in his later recordings. Whereas 'Non più andrai', with the superlative Erich Kunz singing off the very end of maestro's stick, is as crisp and light as it might be today under Jacobs or Gardiner, both of the Countess's arias and Susanna's in the Act 4 garden are, frankly, fearful dirges full of undesired late-19th-century hanging around. Anything remotely soubrettish – eg Susanna and Cherubino sorting out the window jump or the newly united Figaro family celebrating the rediscovery of his parents – is scampered and virtually inaudible. A deal of mugging laughter in the recits suggests that the cast have little confidence in the audience understanding their text.

This set offers a time check on an antique style of performance. Nowadays we would prefer a Count who doesn't sound like a sometime Wotan and Sachs and find himself continually cool in his dominance. And who can keep up with the beat. The ladies have more to offer even if Seefried's 'little girl' voice for Susanna will not be to all tastes and Della Casa sounds more suited to the aristocracy composed by Richard Strauss. The recorded sound gets what it can out of an evidently careful private recording but is inevitably less than three-dimensional. All in all this release is a good idea on paper but disappointing in practice. **Mike Ashman**

## Rimsky-Korsakov

### The Golden Cockerel

**Pavlo Hunka** bass-bar ..... King Dodon  
**Alexey Dolgov** ten ..... Prince Guidon  
**Konstantin Shushakov** bar ..... Prince Afron  
**Alexander Vassiliev** bass ..... Commander Polkan  
**Agnes Zwierko** mez ..... Amelfa  
**Alexander Kravets** ten ..... Astrologer  
**Venera Gimadieva** sop ..... Queen of Shemakha  
**Sheva Tehoval** sop ..... Golden Cockerel  
**Chorus and Orchestra of La Monnaie, Brussels / Alain Altinoglu**

Stage director **Laurent Pelly**

Video director **Myriam Hoyer**

BelAir Classiques Ⓜ DVD BAC147; Ⓜ BAC447  
 (118) • NTSC • 16:9 • DTS-HD MA5.1, DD5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live, December 2016

Includes synopsis



Based on Pushkin's tale, Rimsky-Korsakov composed his final opera *The Golden Cockerel* in 1906-07

(it was premiered posthumously) as a thinly veiled parody of Nicholas II's humiliating defeat in the Russo-Japanese War. Director Laurent Pelly may have a natural flair for comedy, such as the slapstick chasing of the cockerel by the Tsar's two sons, but his production for La Monnaie sadly has limited satirical bite. It is in marked contrast to Dmitri Bertman's razor-sharp depiction of the bumbling Tsar Dodon as a Boris Yeltsin-type figure in Deutsche Oper am Rhein's excellent staging which I enjoyed in Düsseldorf.

However, there's still much to enjoy in Pelly's staging and Alain Altinoglu, making his debut as La Monnaie's new music director, romps through Rimsky's score with glee. Pavlo Hunka's Tsar Dodon rules in his pyjamas from a huge bed perched on top of a slag heap. His ridiculous sons are identical twins, with towering blond quiffs, and Polkan tows Dodon off to battle mounted on an armoured wooden horse. In Act 2, the Queen of Shemakha appears in glittering silver gown with spiky headdress adornment that gives her an alien appearance. At their wedding, they are wheeled in on their double bed atop an armoured tank which sports Polkan's head as a trophy. The Golden Cockerel itself is fabulously plumed, performed by a dancer while Sheva Tehoval sings the role with admirable precision out of camera shot. The wizened Astrologer rises from his death bed to draw the curtain and deliver the pithy epilogue.

Among the performers, Venera Gimadieva shines as the Queen of Shemakha, seductively wrapping herself like a tendril around the chromatic lines of her Hymn to the Sun. Hunka blusters well as the hapless Dodon and Agnes Zwierko is a redoubtable Amelfa. Alexander Kravets hasn't really got the high notes for the Astrologer without resorting to falsetto, but it's a tiny deficit in an otherwise fine cast.

Anna Matison's Mariinsky staging is even more fairy tale-orientated than satirical, with plenty of CGI special effects (and a few weird camera angles). The Shemakha is the standout in that cast too – Aida Garifullina, seductive and bell-like – while the Astrologer is likewise the vocal

fly in the ointment. Fans of Rimsky's operas will naturally need both.

**Mark Pullinger**

*Selected comparison:*

*Gergiev (9/17) (MARI) DVD + Blu-ray MAR0596*

## Tchaikovsky

### The Queen of Spades

**Oleg Kulko** *ten*..... Herman  
**Karina A Flores** *sop*..... Lisa  
**Nina Romanova** *mez*..... Countess  
**Sergei Leiferkus** *bar*..... Count Tomsy  
**Albert Schagidullin** *bar*..... Prince Yeletsky  
**Ekaterina Semenchuk** *contr*..... Polina  
**Viacheslav Voynarovskiy** *ten*..... Chekalinsky  
**Maxim Mikhailov** *bass*..... Surin  
**Felix Livschitz** *ten*..... Chaplitsky  
**Alexey Kanunikov** *bass-bar*..... Narumov  
**Olga Schalaewa** *mez*..... Governess  
**Lilia Gretsova** *sop*..... Masha

**The Gary Bertini Israeli Choir; Ankor Choir; Israel Philharmonic Orchestra / Vladimir Jurowski**

Helicon ® ③ HEL02-9672 (151' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Smolarz Auditorium, Tel Aviv, September 11, 14 & 16, 2012

Includes synopsis



If you've heard his recordings of the symphonies with the LPO (1/18) or his

recent *Sleeping Beauty* (12/17), you'll already know that Vladimir Jurowski is a truly excellent conductor of Tchaikovsky. He's also an extremely fine opera conductor, heading Glyndebourne for 12 years, and was recently announced as Generalmusikdirektor at the Bayerische Staatsoper from 2021. Serge Dorny recently described Jurowski to me as 'a man who breathes theatre'. It's little surprise, therefore, that he conducts a taut, dramatic account of Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*. What is surprising is that this performance, recorded at a trio of concerts with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra in Tel Aviv, dates way back to November 2012 yet has only just been released (in the UK at least).

Jurowski conducts a speedy course through Tchaikovsky's score, a pulsating account, but perhaps he misses ratcheting up the neurotic tension by playing it so fast. Mariss Jansons, another superb Tchaikovskian, also recorded *The Queen of Spades* in concert and takes a more expansive view which is highly effective. Jansons has the excellent Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, whose burnished strings and glowering woodwinds are finer than their sturdy IPO counterparts.

In terms of singers, Jansons also has a clear edge. Tatiana Serjan (Lisa), Misha Didyk (Herman) and Larissa Diadkova (the Countess) all offer more committed, dramatic readings than Jurowski's Tel Aviv cast. Oleg Kulko is a very decent Herman though, his burly tenor capturing the young man's growing hysteria as he seeks the mysterious secret of the three cards. Karina Flores has some squally moments as Lisa and Nina Romanova lacks the haughty imperiousness required of the Countess. Albert Schagidullin is an effective Yeletsky but no match for the refulgent tone of Alexey Markov for Jansons. The only character who is better cast here than in Munich is the Tomsy of Sergei Leiferkus, a role he recorded back in 1991 for Seiji Ozawa! By 2012, there was still plenty of Slavic bite to his dry baritone and his Act 1 Ballad of the Three Cards is very well dispatched. Ekaterina Semenchuk is luxury casting as Polina.

Although this set can't match Jansons's superb BRSO recording, it is certainly worth hearing for Jurowski's impulsive account of a terrific opera. **Mark Pullinger**

*Selected comparison:*

*Jansons (4/15) (BRKL) 900129*

## Verdi

### Luisa Miller

**Marina Rebeka** *sop*..... Luisa Miller  
**Ivan Magri** *ten*..... Rodolfo  
**George Petean** *bar*..... Miller  
**Marko Mimica** *bass-bar*..... Walter  
**Judit Kutasi** *mez*..... Federica  
**Ante Jerkunica** *bass*..... Wurm  
**Corinna Scheurle** *mez*..... Laura  
**Bernhard Schneider** *ten*..... Peasant  
**Bavarian Radio Chorus; Munich Radio Orchestra / Ivan Repušić**

BR-Klassik ® ② 900323 (134' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Prinzregententheater, Munich, September 22 & 24, 2017



Based on concert performances in Munich last year, this is serious, spirited Verdi that nonetheless isn't going to push either the opera or the orchestra performing it into the top league.

Verdi's Schiller adaptation, scrunched by librettist Salvatore Cammarano into a tonally tricky three-act melodrama, is arguably more important for what it signals about Verdi's ambition than for its own qualities as a music drama. The heroine looks back to hapless victims

like Lucia di Lammermoor – a pawn of 'greater' men who decide her fate for her – but also ahead to Verdi's own Violetta, both railing against her fate and achieving some kind of peace with it. Verdi, a great delver into familial strife, also depicts two dysfunctional father-child relationships. Rodolfo is struggling to get away from the shadow of the corrupt Count Walter. Luisa's kindlier but overzealous father, ex-soldier Miller, is unable to protect her from disaster.

The benchmark recording remains the Royal Opera House under Lorin Maazel with Katia Ricciarelli and Plácido Domingo. Marina Rebeka's slightly metallic tone lacks the silvery, silken beauty of Ricciarelli at her best, and her Luisa takes a while to hit her stride: her coloratura is accurate but also somewhat wiry in expression, as if delivered more through determination than delight. Yet she grows in stature as the drama goes on and things get worse (and worse) for Luisa. She rides the waves of 'Tu puniscimi, o Signore' and the aria's fiery cabaletta 'A brani, a brani' with blazing conviction, although there is more to the orchestral accompaniment to this scena than the jaunty rum-ti-tum supplied by the Munich Radio Orchestra under Ivan Repušić. The Croatian shows a good grip of the music but the playing, no more than decent, lacks some spark and imagination. Perhaps it's not a coincidence that one of the most startling passages here is the unaccompanied quartet in Act 2 for Luisa, her love rival Federica, Walter and his sinister, predatory chum, Wurm.

The rest of the cast is strong. Ivan Magri reportedly took lessons from Luciano Pavarotti, and there's something of Pav's open-throated sound in the young tenor's ringing tone and winning ardour: his showpiece moment, 'Quando le sere al placido', seethes with affecting anguish. The two dads, George Petean's Miller and Marko Mimica's Walter, have fine voices but neither quite has enough gravitas; Mimica, barely into his thirties, is simply too young for the role. As the utter rotter of the piece, Wurm, Ante Jerkunica could be more memorably nasty. Judit Kutasi sinks into the contralto-ish depths of the sketchily drawn Federica with some relish. **Neil Fisher**

*Selected comparison:*

*Maazel (6/80\*) (DG) 459 481-2GTA2*





Serious and spirited Verdi: Ivan Repušić and his cast following a concert performance of Luisa Miller in Munich

## Zemlinsky

### Eine florentinische Tragödie

Heidi Brunner *sop* ..... Bianca

Charles Reid *ten* ..... Guido Bardi

Wolfgang Koch *bar* ..... Simone

ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra /

Bertrand de Billy

Capriccio © C5325 (52' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Konzerthaus, Vienna,

May 20, 2010

Includes synopsis, libretto and translation



Zemlinsky's *Eine florentinische Tragödie*, completed in 1916, may not

have the despairing intensity that distinguishes his subsequent opera, *Der Zwerg*, but its modest duration and sumptuous scoring make it an attractive proposition for home listening. Based on Oscar Wilde's unfinished play *A Florentine Tragedy*, the story concerns a merchant, Simone, who returns home early to find his wife, Bianca, in the company of a local nobleman, Guido

Bardi. The ensuing conversation proceeds as if nothing untoward has occurred, although Guido's covetousness for Bianca and Simone's animosity towards the visitor become ever more apparent as the drama proceeds, resulting in a violent denouement. The passion that Bianca finds for her previously despised husband at the end is perhaps unconvincing, but Zemlinsky's descriptive score reflects every nuance of the text as well as underpinning the drama with an increasing sense of tension.

The vitality of Bertrand de Billy's conducting and the richness of the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra's playing in this 2010 concert recording are both extremely compelling. Wolfgang Koch provides a committed and well-rounded portrayal of Simone, capturing the passion as well as the menace of the vengeful merchant, while Charles Reid gives a youthfully lyrical performance of the ill-fated Guido. Heidi Brunner is focused and ardent as Bianca. Unlike Chailly's refined Decca recording, where the singers tend to

sound like an adjunct to the orchestra, the balance here favours the voices, occasionally at the expense of orchestral detail. Jurowski's marvellously lucid LPO version, despite also being a concert recording, offers a more natural balance between voices and orchestra and is preferable to both in this respect. The Capriccio CD booklet includes a libretto in German and English, although the benefit is rather undermined by the English text having random letters missing on most pages. In addition, a section of the libretto accounting for about 90 seconds of singing in track 6 is missing in both languages. These presentational deficiencies aside, this is a distinguished addition to the discography of this rewarding late-Romantic opera.

**Christian Hoskins**

*Selected comparisons:*

RCO, Chailly (12/978) (DECC) 473 734-2DF2

LPO, Jurowski (A/14) (LPO) LPO0078

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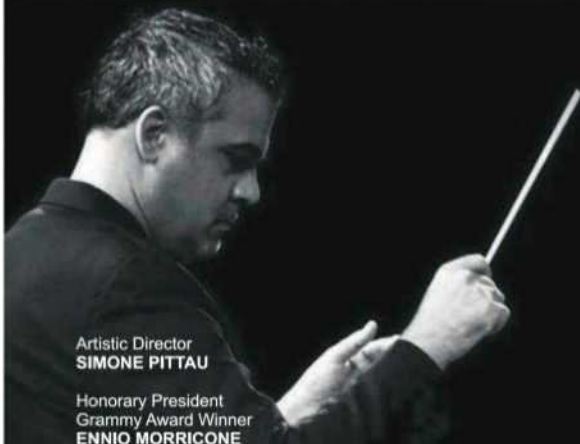
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ROMAN SIMOVIC – violino MONTENEGRO - 10/20 Agosto 2018  
STEFAN MILENKOVICH – violino SERBIA - 8/18 Agosto 2018  
KRZYSZTOF CHORZELSKI – viola POLONIA - 8/18 Agosto 2018  
MILENA SIMOVIC – viola SERBIA - 10/20 Agosto 2018  
GIOVANNI GNOCCHI – violoncello ITALIA - 8/18 Agosto 2018  
ALBERTO BOCINI – contrabbasso ITALIA - 8/18 Agosto 2018  
RATIMIR MARTINOVIC – pianoforte MONTENEGRO - 10/20 Agosto 2018  
OLGA SITKOVETSKY – pianoforte RUSSIA - 8/18 Agosto 2018  
JULIE MOULIN – flauto FRANCIA - 8/18 Agosto 2018  
JÉRÔME GUICHARD – oboe FRANCIA - 8/18 Agosto 2018  
BRUNO BONANSEA – clarinetto FRANCIA - 8/18 Agosto 2018  
ROBIN O'NEILL – fagotto REGNO UNITO - 10/18 Agosto 2018  
BOŠTJAN LIPOVŠEK – corno SLOVENIA - 8/18 Agosto 2018



The Editors of Gramophone's sister music magazines, Jazzwise and Songlines, recommend some of their favourite recordings from the past month

# Jazz

Brought to you by **jazzwise**

## Dinosaur

Wonder Trail

Edition © EDN1111



Laura Jurd writes indie pop bangers now. Her latest release with Dinosaur is a hymn to the sonic capabilities of the analogue synth, inspired by the likes of Aphex Twin and Norwegian indie band Broen. It's an outstanding project that combines heavy grooves and bright harmonies, enhanced by Elliot Galvin's use of candy-coloured, purpose-built synth sounds and lots of studio tinkering. The opener, 'Renewal (part I)', starts with a flare of noise (a statement of intent) and a recurring fanfare riff, while 'Renewal (part II)' has *Stranger Things* vibes, with sudden switches between grooving improvisation and fizzing electronic ambience – like

stepping from reality into the shadow world of 'the upside down'. Thoughtful improvisations and whimsical folkloric touches connect *Wonder Trail* to Jurd's earlier releases. 'Set Free', one of three tracks to feature vocals, lures you in with a folk song before going hard with strobing, alarm-call synths and thundering drums; and 'Forgive, Forget' and 'Old Times' Sake' have blues and country music echoes. This feels like an exciting new direction for Jurd and Dinosaur. **Thomas Rees**

## Brad Mehldau

After Bach

Nonesuch © 7559 79318-0



As we all know, JS Bach invented modern jazz – where would Bird have been without him? – and the likes of Jacques

Loussier have regularly jazzed up the great German keyboard improviser's back catalogue, to stirring and popular effect. Mehldau doesn't take the easy route, you wouldn't expect him to – and though some passages of 'Before Bach: Benediction' may have you squeezing your eyes as you try to follow his musical thoughts, you wouldn't want him to either. Here he pairs straight recitals of four preludes and one fugue from Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier* with compositions and improvisations inspired by them: 'After Bachs'.

Is the result jazz? The densely – and, given its title, appropriately – dreamy 'After Bach: Dream' probably owes more to Debussy than any later jazzy interpreter of Herr B. But who cares? *After Bach* probably won't become your favourite Mehldau release, but you'll find it hard to resist all the same. **Robert Shore**

# World Music

Brought to you by **SONGLINES**

## Yiddish Glory

The Lost Songs of World War II

Six Degrees © 57036 1282-2



It is truly extraordinary how so many treasures of Jewish music got lost or were concealed behind the Iron Curtain during the Cold War. In this case it is Yiddish songs by Jewish soldiers in the Red Army, collected in the 1940s by musicologist Moisei Beregovsky (1892–1961). The collection was discovered in unmarked boxes in the Vernadsky National Library, Kiev, in the 1990s but it has taken till now to bring them to life again. Most of the 18 songs, about heroic but brutal deeds in the army, are satires against Hitler and accounts of atrocities, including the massacre at Babi Yar. They found only lyrics, so the music has been created mainly from folk and

popular songs by Russian singer Psoy Korolenko and arranged by violinist Sergei Erdenko. With vocals mainly by Korolenko, Erdenko and the excellent Canadian singer Sophie Milman, the style is cabaret and popular song rather than klezmer.

Some of the songs are alarmingly brutal ('My Machine Gun' and 'Babi Yar'), others very moving ('Mames Gruv' and 'Tulchin'), the latter possessing a truly haunting melody. It's a remarkable labour of love and is brilliantly executed. **Simon Broughton**

## Orquesta Akokán

Orquesta Akokán

Daptone Records © DAP-052



Son and salsa are soulful and sultry, but mambo has got the edge when it comes to having a laugh. The opening track of this

self-titled debut from a big band fronted by Cuban singer José 'Pepito' Gómez, 'Mambo Rapidito', is a shimmering display of musical and vocal jokes, from the cheeky 'Tequila'-style bass and plinky-plonky jazz piano to the flatulent blasts of brass and the tongue-twisting wordplay. The other eight songs don't quite rise to the same dizzy heights of humour, but what they lose in wit they make up for in joy. Gómez is joined by César 'Pupy' Pedrosó from Los Van Van, a percussion section featuring members of NG La Banda and a sax team built around musos from the Cuban band Irakere.

Recorded as live at Havana's Estudios Areito, this is a wonderful reminder of the loose, life-loving music of the pre-revolutionary era. Son will always deservedly have aficionados but if you want a taste of Cuban cool, take a mental flight back to the 1950s and try to stay belted in to your seat. **Chris Moss**

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# REISSUES & ARCHIVE

Our monthly guide to the most exciting catalogue releases, historic issues and box-sets

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## Esa-Pekka Salonen's legacy

**Rob Cowan** listens to 61 discs of the Finnish conductor-composer's recordings for Sony Classical

Talking to Andrew Farach-Colton for this month's cover story, Esa-Pekka Salonen opines that 'the only way to get to grips with a piece of music is repeated listening until you know it well enough that you can start to understand how it hangs together'. The reason those words resonated so meaningfully with me is that what most strikes home listening to Salonen's recordings over the years – and in particular the consistently alert productions featured in this new set which gathers all his recordings for CBS/Sony Classical – is that very quality of close attentiveness, the fact that he has listened repeatedly and come to grips with the music not only for his own sake, but for our sakes as well.

His thoughtfully doubting observations regarding 'right' and 'wrong' also appeal, and his attitude to the problematic concept of 'truth'. Far better to oppose one's convictions than to slavishly follow them, though in the act of performing, Salonen's convictions are, as of any one moment, never in doubt. This sort of vital life view is essential for any re-creative or (in Salonen's case) creative musician. And the proof is in the way some of his interpretations have evolved.

For example, compare the 1989 Philharmonia version of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* included here with Salonen's Los Angeles Philharmonic re-make from some 15 years later (DG, A/06) and the difference is striking, a helter-skelter go-cart careering down hill (Philharmonia) as opposed to a handsome limo with power to spare that's held in check (LA). By contrast the two LA versions of Debussy's *La mer* (Sony and DG, around 12 years apart), both of them excitably sensual, have much in common, although the later version is the marginally more relaxed of the two. The Philharmonia account of Sibelius's Fifth is another high-octane affair, especially

the closing section of the first movement, which accelerates in breathless abandon whereas the LA recording of the four *Lemminkäinen Legends* is both beautifully judged and superbly recorded, the rolling bass drum in the opening 'Lemminkäinen and the Maidens of Saari' thrillingly prominent, 'The Swan of Tuonela' treated to sensitively terraced dynamics and 'Lemminkäinen's Return' enjoying an appropriate sense of impatience but never over-driven en route.

**Salonen's performances have the virtue of durability; the more you listen the more you hear**

On the Nielsen front the performance that most caught my attention was of the pre-modernist Sixth Symphony where Salonen's acute feeling for shifting textures, whether sudden or slowly evolving, targets the work's quirky humour and dazzling originality. Here the conductor-composer is in clover, relishing ideas that he would surely have been proud to claim as his own, or at least that's how the performance sounds. By contrast the Fifth Symphony never really catches fire, the first movement's shockwave battlefront sounding lacklustre while the potentially disruptive side-drummer emerges as very half-hearted (maybe a fault of the recorded balance). The *Espansiva* is better, and the wind concertos better still but I think Salonen would do well to plan a new Nielsen cycle with fresh thoughts replacing the old. After all 'new thoughts' are very much what he's about.

Then of course there's the evidence of Salonen's own composing skills, most prominently in this context the *LA Variations*, a crowded community of sounds and effects, pulsating, dazzling in its range of colours and rigorously organised;

this is intelligent music and you couldn't ask for a more compelling performance of it than the one Salonen and his Los Angeles players offer here.

Salonen's 1997 Los Angeles recording of Bruckner's Fourth Symphony (Nowak edition, 1953) provides another effective litmus test for how his conducting style functions, the knowing way he brings out the cello line behind the violins in the cheerful second subject, the unforced grandeur of the brass soon afterwards and his pacing of the finale, pinpointing individual episodes without spoiling the flow. Around the time this recording was made I saw him conduct the work on a glorious summer's evening at the Hollywood Bowl, and the effect was much the same, more a 'pastoral' symphony than especially 'romantic', with an extended spot of inclement weather placed last.

Mahler, though, is another matter. It was with the Third Symphony that Salonen made his debut with the Philharmonia and although in his article Andrew Farach-Colton recalls hearing Salonen give 'a strikingly modern-sounding interpretation' of the piece in New York, this Los Angeles recording doesn't quite achieve the same effect, missing out as it does on the epic dimension. The Fourth on the other hand does precisely that, adding luminosity, a certain Mozartian elegance, expressive playing and a most wonderful account of the slow movement, a story within a story, which is very much of the essence when it comes to what is surely one of Mahler's greatest slow movements.

Haydn is another good testing ground. A Stockholm Chamber Orchestra programme of Symphonies Nos 22, 78 and 82 makes one yearn for more Haydn symphonies from this source, where articulation is pin-sharp, the playing bursting with character and the





Esa-Pekka Salonen: as a conductor, the 'polar opposite' of Leonard Bernstein

interpretations the result of an extremely lively mind, the outer movements of *The Bear* (No 82) full of life whereas the Menuetto is played 'molto pomposo'.

One of the conductor's finest LA Phil CDs for Sony Classical features music by the Mexican composer Silvestre Revueltas, the sort of repertoire that pushes all Salonen's buttons: a sense of rhythm, a feeling for vivid orchestral colour, novel invention, exotic harmonies and a keen sense of narrative, it's all there. Salonen's account of *Sensemaya* has to be the finest – and the best recorded – available, and *The Night of the Maya* is hardly less impressive. The finale of Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra dares to risk the fastest possible tempo, Salonen rushing at the opening like a fearless Viking marauder, though he keeps up the pace, just, and textures are fine-spun. *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta* generates tremendous intensity, especially in the first two movements, and the piano concertos, featuring a nimble-fingered Yefim Bronfman, suggest a palpable sense of play in the Second (placed first), again with some keenly driven tempos, while the First displays a keen appreciation of the music's belligerently barbed sound world.

So, what are the main strengths of this set? There are many but above all I'd cite Salonen's consistently confident promotion of new or recent music, the

four Lutosławski symphonies, a superb Dallapiccola album (*Canti di prigionia* being especially memorable), a strikingly vivid programme of Bernard Herrmann film scores, the music of Anders Hillborg (a discovery for me and I loved it) and Magnus Lindberg, consistently approachable Lars-Erik Larsson, life-altering Ligeti (including *Le Grand Macabre*), *All Rise* by Wynton Marsalis, large-scale Messiaen (*Turangalila* and the wonderful *Des canyons aux étoiles*), absorbing Saariaho, Takemitsu with the guitarist John Williams, much more Stravinsky (my favourite being *Apollon musagète* with the Stockholm Chamber Orchestra) and more Nielsen to boot. And there are a couple of 'bonuses', variously orchestrated Bach and a well-planned 'Nordic Festival' filled mostly with popular items, though the Neolithic-style tone poem *Geysir* by the Icelandic master Jón Leifs will prove a rude awakening for some.

Everything is well prepared, so that even the most difficult items are given their best possible chance. And limitations? Perhaps an element of slick showmanship here and there, not always to the music's advantage, in the custom-built Berlin Philharmonic Prokofiev *Romeo and Juliet* selection for example, 'Romeo resolves to avenge the death of Mercutio' which races away to start with (at 00'42") but when the rushing strings enter, needs

to calm down ever so slightly. The outer sections of Debussy's 'Fêtes' (*Nocturnes*) sound relatively bland, although the central processional builds impressively and *La Damselle élue* with the soprano Dawn Upshaw is beautifully performed. Salonen and his orchestras work well with soloists, whether it be (in this particular context) the pianists Yefim Bronfman and Paul Crossley, or the violinists Joshua Bell (in *The Red Violin* soundtrack) and Cho-Liang Lin.

Salonen is the polar opposite of Leonard Bernstein, whose recordings I've also been listening to recently. In general I'd say that Salonen's head rules his heart, which is not to say that Bernstein lacked intellectual rigour or Salonen's performances lack warmth, just that the interpretative pendulum is fixed to swing either way according to who you're listening to. Salonen's performances have the virtue of durability; the more you listen the more you hear and there are few questionable gestures to test your patience with each visit. Playing standards are generally extremely high and Sony Classical has packaged the collection into a sturdy box (retailing at about £115) with a highly readable essay by Mark Swed.

Just one complaint, production-wise: although the individual discs are numbered 1-61 in the booklet track-listing, the individual discs are not numbered – unless you use your magnifying glass to check the miniscule 11-digit catalogue number which, beyond a hyphen, appends the disc number. This is a real nuisance, so please, Sony, in future could you print prominent disc numbers on the sleeves to match what is printed in the booklet. That way, we can at least attempt to keep the discs in order. And believe me there's plenty in this set you will want quick access to. It's that good.



## THE RECORDING

**Esa-Pekka Salonen: The Complete Sony Recordings**

Sony Classical © (61 discs) 88985 47184-2

# Claudio Arrau: 30 years on 80 discs

**Jed Distler** has been listening to the Philips legacy of one of the last century's greatest pianists

Having lavished comprehensive treatment upon the back catalogues of numerous keyboard luminaries, Universal Classics at long last focuses its efforts on the complete Philips recordings by Claudio Arrau (1903-91). The Arrau/Philips partnership began in 1962, and lasted until his death, proving to be this pianist's longest and most productive association with a major label.

Weighing in at 80 CDs, the collection is mostly arranged into subgroups by composer. Beethoven's music occupies the first 29 discs, followed by Mozart (CDs 30-36), Schubert (37-41), Chopin (42-59), Schumann (50-56), Liszt (57-62), Brahms (63-66), Debussy (69-71) and Bach (72-73). Two discs contain Arrau's 1963 Concertgebouw Schumann/Grieg Concerto coupling, his Grieg remake with Sir Colin Davis and the Boston Symphony, and a Davis/Boston Tchaikovsky First Concerto (67-68). The 1983 Munich recital, briefly available on LP from Philips France, appears on CD for the first time in the West.

In addition to Arrau's live 1976 DG Beethoven Fourth Concerto with Leonard Bernstein (wilful!), we have the pianist's complete output for American Decca, the label to whom he was under contract in the early 1950s. And last but not least, three 'bonus item' fillers: a 1964 interview, a 1970 talk on the Beethoven sonatas, and a 1928 Balakirev *Islamey* that offers a glimpse of Arrau as a young firebrand, decades before the pianist's probing rhetoric and serious minded persona would come to full flower. A 159-page booklet includes an informative essay by Jeremy Hayes, reproductions of rare LP jackets, and two separate indexes respectively ordered by composer and recording date.

Arrau always strived to fuse the subjective yet passionate force of his childhood idols Ferruccio Busoni, Teresa Carreño, Edwin Fischer and Wilhelm Furtwängler with the literalist aesthetic that started to hold sway during the pianist's formative years in early 20th-century Berlin, particularly via such practitioners as Artur Schnabel and Otto Klemperer. Fidelity to the score and attention to detail intensified over the years, sometimes to doctrinaire and even mannered effect; Arrau was known for systematically executing ornaments on the beat, and never omitting a single repeat.

The American Decca recordings originally met with mixed critical reactions. Certain critics likened the slightly diffuse

recorded sound to that of an 'aeroplane hanger', while the American writer and piano authority Harold C Schoenberg disparaged the Chopin performances as 'mannered and unnatural', citing Arrau's constantly changing pulse and 'creaking' rubato. I, for one, agree with Arrau's biographer Joseph Horowitz that the engineering actually conveys a palpable sense of how Arrau's full-bodied sonority projected and congealed in a concert hall. And what's so mannered or unnatural about Arrau taking trouble to emphasise and give meaning to the polyphonic undercurrents in the codas of the Ballades and Scherzos? Likewise, the pianist's treatment of fioritura as rapid, expressive melodies rather than decorative window dressing to be glossed over parallels how Maria Callas shaped cadenzas in *bel canto* operas with similar specificity and purpose.

Time and again throughout these 80 CDs it becomes clear how Arrau aimed to seek more than to please

In my September 2015 *Gramophone* Collection survey of Beethoven's *Diabelli* Variations, I mentioned how the meticulous voice leading and intelligently modulated legato articulation in Arrau's Decca recording abounded with ravishing tracery and sustaining power. This also holds true of Arrau's Decca *Eroica* Variations, and the five 'name' sonatas he recorded in 1954 but remained unissued until 2011. The *Moonlight*, *Pathétique*, *Appassionata* and *Les adieux* finales boast more convincing forward drive and sonorous depth than in Arrau's other studio recorded versions. He accounts for every note in the *Hammerklavier*'s gnarliest passages, showing how it's possible to be combative and clean at the same time (in contrast to, say, Solomon's unruffled suavity).

However, Arrau would intensify and tighten his expressive trajectory when re-recording the *Hammerklavier* nine years later for Philips. It is but just one of many peaks in his highly distinctive 1962-66 Beethoven sonata cycle. To be certain, Arrau's broad tempos and rhetorical inflections are antipodal to the hard-hitting brio associated with the Schnabel/Serkin school and such direct and indirect descendents as Claude Frank, Friedrich

Gulda, Charles Rosen, Bruce Hungerford, Stephen Kovacevich, Richard Goode, Stewart Goodyear and fortepianist Ronald Brautigam. Yet if you give Arrau the benefit of the doubt, his approach will win you over by virtue of a supremely finished technique that allows for no vagaries, an astute ear for polyphony and harmonic tension, and tremendous sustaining power.

The latter informs particularly gripping readings of the slow movements in Op 7 and Op 10 No 3, Op 26's Funeral March, the *Waldstein*'s shimmering Rondo, the Op 109 and *Appassionata* variation movements, and an Op 111 Arietta where Arrau's ample rubatos fortify the transitions and thereby enhance rather than dissipate the music's cumulative power. If the outer movements of Arrau's 1964 Beethoven concerto cycle don't match the fire of his 1950s EMI versions, his fastidious sense of detail still puts mere mortal pianists to shame: note the consistently precise articulation of the Rondo's theme in the First, the impeccable diction governing the Fourth's runs and roulades, and, in the *Emperor*'s first movement, the utter ease with which Arrau dispatches the passages containing difficult right-hand thirds against descending left-hand triplets. Arrau's full-throated pianism dominates his relatively restrained partners (Henryk Szeryng and János Starker) in the Triple Concerto, while the six Beethoven violin sonatas he recorded with Arthur Grimaux are prime examples of strong and completely mismatched individualists. Here Arrau occupies his own world, oblivious to Grimaux's gestures towards lightness and animation; clearly chamber music was not Arrau's thing.

Nor are Arrau's weighty, bass-oriented Chopin concertos my cup of tea, although the concert rondo *Krakowiak* features some unexpectedly unbridled fingerwork (according to one of his students, Arrau considered *Krakowiak* one of the repertoire's most challenging works). But the passionate sweep and large-scale authority of Arrau's 1970s recordings of Chopin's Op 28 Preludes, F minor Fantasy Op 49, Fourth Ballade and Second Impromptu build upon and ultimately surpass his earlier studio versions. Don't expect charm and élan from Arrau's Chopin Waltzes, although his probing and prodding throughout the Nocturnes yields more organic results.

Arrau's Schumann sometimes could





Claudio Arrau's recordings for Philips document a 30-year period of remarkable pianism

bog down and border on fussy, as his *Kreisleriana*, *Waldszenen*, *Symphonic Etudes* and first two sonatas bear out. Yet he gives colourful voice to *Carnaval's* volatile characterisations, while submitting to the C major Fantasy's wild abandon without the least technical compromise (the skips in the second movement's coda have rarely come off so fervently and accurately at the same time). Arrau's *Faschingsschwank aus Wien* stands alongside the celebrated Michelangeli and Richter interpretations, minus their capricious dynamic emendations. Few pianists of comparable stature essayed the complete Op 21 Noveletten on record prior to Arrau's standard-setting traversals. Some may liken Arrau's *Kinderszenen* not so much to pleasant reverie than to intensive dream therapy. But if you give his super-slow 'Träumerei' a chance, you'll eventually notice how cannily Arrau varies chord arpeggiations towards pinpointed expressive ends.

The latter trait is one of just many hallmarks that explain the elevated stature of Arrau's Liszt. The pianist is not afraid of the composer's theatricality and grand gestures, yet he eschews effects for effects' sake, and always takes Liszt's markings on faith. A good example of what I mean can be found in *Vallée D'Obermann*. The fanciful tempo fluctuations and textual doctoring that Vladimir Horowitz employs, for example, are wonderful in their way.

Yet, by contrast, Arrau projects the music's brooding angst through means of colour, touch and timing, capped by a final peroration that flows from what came before, as opposed to suddenly whipping out an octave étude. The Verdi paraphrases, the first of Arrau's two B minor Sonata recordings and the *Transcendental Etudes* retain their reference status to this day, as do his ardent and altogether grand conceptions of the Brahms Second and Third Sonatas, Op 10 Ballades, E flat minor Scherzo and Piano Concerto No 1. I still find Arrau's Brahms B flat Concerto first movement too broken up into small pieces and discontinuous, but his energized acceleration in the Scherzo movement's final pages evokes a mad waltz.

In a 1998 *Gramophone* Reputations feature on Arrau, I wrote 'one might argue that the recordings Arrau made beyond the age of 80 owe their increasingly microscopic divisions of time and angular, asymmetrical phrasing to waning technical prowess'. Surely the late period Schubert *Moments Musicaux* and *Klavierstücke* D946 are rough-going compared to the EMI recordings from Arrau's prime (or the inspired D958 Sonata in this collection), not to mention the laborious Debussy *La plus que lente* in relation to the seasoned poise of the late 1970s *Préludes* and *Images*, or the joyless Bach partitas from Arrau's last sessions. However, don't dismiss the digital

Beethoven sonata cycle out of hand (Arrau remade 30 of the 32 works, leaving out the *Moonlight* and the *Hammerklavier*), while the 1985 *Diabelli Variations* find the pianist on sovereign form. Whether or not the emphatic accents and underlined dissonances in Arrau's 1980s Mozart sonatas stem from eroding facility or dogged intention, they add up to confrontational and cliché-free music making. Arrau often cited 'the proximity of death' hovering around certain composers or works, and that image readily descends over the Mozart

B minor Adagio, stretched out here to 16 epic minutes, with all repeats, naturally.

Time and again throughout these 80 CDs it becomes clear how Arrau aimed to seek more than to please. For all of the technical emphasis he placed on relaxation and economy of means, he never took the easy way out, musically speaking. That's why it's not a good idea to listen to Arrau with a passive ear or a casual attitude. You have to work with him. And when you do, the artistic rewards are even more gratifying and long lasting.



## THE RECORDING

**Claudio Arrau: The Complete Philips Recordings**

Decca © (80 discs) 483 2984

# LP RELEASES

## *A dynamic new era for vinyl?*

**Peter Quantrill's** eclectic round-up embraces both Laurie Anderson and Niels Gade

**V**ats of digital ink have been spilled on the health of the CD industry, and while the New Releases section of *Gramophone* shows no sign of thinning out, some of these LP releases may be a sign of things to come.

### *Modern Classics*

Canteloupe has issued **Michael Gordon's** gripping *Sonatra* on a 45rpm record and made the digital files available for download and streaming. At scarcely longer than half an hour, the CD would look short-measure in today's market, and it may be that the label managers at Canteloupe know their market: contemporary music still attracts contemporary audiences, who are bypassing CD as yesterday's technology.

No programme notes are printed; instead, the sleeve encloses a copy of the score, so you may follow for yourself Vicky Chow's dauntless feat of prestidigitation over a continuous quarter-hour of arpeggios modulating through a six-octave span. The tempo is 'as fast as possible': 'Maintain steady machine-like tempo throughout,' continues Gordon's instruction to the performer. 'Do not speed up or slow down. Absolutely no use of pedal anywhere.' It's the kind of piece that might have had the teenage Prokofiev shaking his head and wondering, 'Why didn't I think of that?'

Composed in 2004, *Sonatra* tips the wink to Ol' Blue Eyes. Chow plays it again on Side B, now on a piano tuned to 'just intonation' of disorientingly uneven intervals compared to the equal-temperament Side A. Heard this way, both the velocity and harmony of *Sonatra* place it alongside the Etudes of Ligeti and in the tradition of Nancarrow's Sonatas for Player Piano, if tradition is quite the word for outsider art that never sought to belong to anyone anywhere.

Chow's breathtaking performance should establish *Sonatra* as a contemporary classic; more *recherché* pleasures arrive from Mode, with the first volume of a projected series reviving the work of another composer who found great

beauty in the gaps between the semitones, **Horatiu Radulescu**. The French-Romanian composer died in 2008 at the age of 66, leaving (among much else) five piano sonatas with subtitles drawn from Lao Tse: *Settle your dust, this is the primal identity* is the last of them, from 2003, played by Stephen Clarke with intense sympathy for the bell-like resonances that made Radulescu a potent influence on fellow, more familiar 'Spectral' composers such as Tristan Murail and Gérard Grisey.

The album's major work is the Fifth String Quartet, *Before the universe was born*: there are 29 minute-long sections, each bearing its own, similarly mystic Lao Tse epigram which are 'spoken' through the rhythms. *Flautando* bowing and *scordatura* tuning evoke a perpetually foreign, uncannily electro-acoustic world filled with light and receding horizons.

### *Gergiev's Mariinsky Nutcracker is pressed on festive red (Act 1) and green (Act 2) vinyl*

The floods and storms of Hurricane Sandy in 2012 leave tidemarks on the titles of *Landfall*, a cycle of instrumental songs composed for the Kronos Quartet by **Laurie Anderson**. The composer adds her own offbeat commentary from time to time, lightening the generally sombre mood with diary entries from the time and a typically wry reproach to people who tell you about their dreams. While deluxe repackagings of cult albums have a ready market, Warner Music would surely score a hit with *United States Live*, her breakthrough piece from 1984 on five LPs featuring the original version of *O Superman*.

Another Nonesuch LP will come as a pleasant surprise to collectors who can recall the whoosh and crackle of the label's 1970s vinyl. **Steve Reich's** *Drumming* and *Sextet* have been well served on LP by DG and LSO Live respectively; *Quartet* (2013) for percussion and *Pulse* (2015) for chamber ensemble take us back to that golden period in Steve Reich's output. The one rough, the other smooth like two sides of

sandpaper, both are instantly recognisable Reich yet new, especially in the abrupt pauses and discontinuities of Quartet's opening movement. Performances (by the Colin Currie Group and International Contemporary Ensemble) are as smooth and highly polished as the LP surfaces.

### THE RECORDINGS

**Gordon** Sonatra Chow

Canteloupe ● CA21125

**Radulescu** String Quartet No 5. Piano Sonata

No 5 JACK Qt, Clarke

Mode ● 290

**Anderson** Landfall Laurie Anderson / Kronos

Nonesuch ● 7559 79339-0

**Reich** Pulse. Quartet International

Contemporary Ensemble; Colin Currie

Group Nonesuch ● 7559 75324-5

### *Russian Reissues*

The 'analogue' character of Teodor Currentzis's remarkable **Tchaikovsky** *Pathétique* was strikingly evident on its first, digital release (1/18). Does it find a natural home on LP? Yes and no. *Col legno* bows in the first movement and swirling bands of brass in the March fairly leap from the speakers, it's true, but that's partly because the volume level must be set to 'small earthquake' in order to raise the symphony's tenebrous opening and close from total inaudibility. Renewed acquaintance intensifies a perplexity I experienced at a certain lack of podium engagement with the inner movements (in relative terms). It remains, all the same, a recording to return to, and with the kind of anticipatory caution one might reserve for Furtwängler or Mitropoulos: not everyday listening! Do replace Sony Classical's unlined paper inner-sleeve if you want your copy to last the distance.

The Mariinsky label has grown an LP off-shoot: most attractively so in the case of *The Nutcracker*, which is pressed on festive red (Act 1) and green (Act 2) vinyl. Valery Gergiev has slackened the reins a touch since his single-CD Philips affair, and to advantage from the syncopated pointing of the Overture onwards. I also enjoyed the more integrated, bassier but



less aggressive recording (as Mark Pullinger did in reviewing the CD, 12/16), and the Mariinsky wind soloists take advantage of the fractional extra space afforded them to shape their lines with more dramatically pointed, less symphonically driven attention to detail.

The sets are handsomely presented in gatefold sleeves, though the LPs themselves are marginally noisier than the other sets under review, and transferred at a fairly low level even when the playing time is short, such as the 13-minute Side 2 for Daniil Trifonov's First Piano Concerto of Tchaikovsky. His recent concerts have revealed this 2011 recording to be a work in progress, fresh from his triumph at the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow; Denis Matsuev is both more responsive and mercurial in **Rachmaninov** (Piano Concertos Nos 1 and 3), yet he too would benefit from a piano sound recorded in sharper focus.

### THE RECORDINGS

**Tchaikovsky** Symphony No 6

MusicAeterna / Currentzis

Sony Classical ● 88985 40435-1

**Tchaikovsky** The Nutcracker

Mariinsky Orchestra / Gergiev

Mariinsky ● MAR0593-LP

**Tchaikovsky** Piano Concerto No 1 etc

Trifonov; Mariinsky Orchestra / Gergiev

Mariinsky ● MAR0530-LP

**Rachmaninov** Piano Concertos Nos 1 & 3,

Paganini Rhapsody

Matsuev; Mariinsky Orchestra / Gergiev

Mariinsky ● MAR0505-LP

### *Debussy and more*

A carefully programmed, beautifully pressed sampler from the Warner Classics complete **Debussy Edition** presents, on Side 1, a pocket guide to the French piano school. Representatives include Cécile Ousset (an assertively recorded 'Clair de lune'), Michel Béroff (rather more supple and suggestive in the First Arabesque), Yuri Egorov (a playful, richly pedalled 'Jardins dans la pluie') and even Debussy himself, via piano roll. Excerpts from *Pour le piano* and *Children's Corner* are taken from a complete 1968-9 album by Samson François which is reissued complete with its original cover on a separate release. Reviewing a UK imprint in January 1983, Joan Chissell recalled how Cortot had sent François off to Marguerite Long to straighten him out: to hear how Cortot's plan didn't work, try the lovably slipshod rhythm of *Pour le piano*'s Prelude or his inimitable rubato in the Minuet of the *Suite bergamasque*, which 'speaks' within an



Zuzana Růžicková's Bach returns on LP alongside the wonderful documentary 'Music is Life'

ambience that has been sucked out by the boxy remastering for CD.

EuroArts has drawn from the 20-CD Erato box of Bach (1/17) to present a tribute to Zuzana Růžicková on both LP and DVD as 'Music is Life'. Restored to its original analogue format (albeit digitally processed), the Capriccio BWV992 ('on the death of a beloved brother') makes a more realistic, less up-front impact than on CD, and the era-defying musical personality of Růžicková is presented in the round. As well as the obvious, Gothic majesty of the minor-key Toccatas BWV910 and 915, a warm and even vulnerable side to Růžicková's playing emerges from the LP. The documentary film tells her appalling and inspiring life-story through historical footage of Auschwitz and 1960s concerts as well as modern-day interviews with younger admirers such as Mahan Esfahani and the great lady herself, wreathed in cigarette smoke at all times. Essential listening, and viewing.

Another trend-setting new recording is *Erlkönigs Tochter* ('The Earl-King's Daughter'), a forgotten 40-minute cantata by **Niels Gade** from 1854, presented here with native fervour in a transparent and spacious studio recording by the Danish National Vocal Ensemble and the 'period' instruments of Concerto Copenhagen under their founder-director, Lars Ulrik Mortensen.

For fans of obscure Romantic cantatas and oratorios – count me in – *Erlkönigs Tochter* will make a delightful discovery. The text is the work of many hands, including Hans Christian Andersen: a Romantic reworking of Danish folk tales,

depicting valiant knights, sure-footed steeds and blonde-tressed daughters, in a local tradition that later begat the *Gurre-Lieder* of Jens Peter Jacobsen. Gade's sectional writing of sturdy solo recitatives and lilting choruses makes this choral ballad a (not very) Nordic cousin to the *Ballade vom Pagen und der Königstochter* of Schumann, but the orchestral scoring, as often with Gade, betrays a positive debt to Mendelssohn in *Midsummer Night's Dream* vein.

DaCapo has done Gade proud: an eight-page booklet includes not only a good historical essay but the original Danish text, the sung German version which became a popular success for Gade in his lifetime, and an English translation. This was drawn up in 1872 by 'Miss Louisa Vance', responsible for such immortal couplets as 'From golden spurs is the charger bleeding/ Sir Oluf, Sir Oluf, draw rein, check thy speeding!' As usual, the LP includes a voucher for an MP3 download; other digital formats available from the DaCapo website include 16-bit FLAC and 'Studio Master+' 24-bit, 192kHz files, which will require serious kit to do them justice. In fact just about the only way you can't hear *Erlkönigs Tochter* is on CD.

### THE RECORDINGS

**Debussy** 'Impressions'

Warner Classics ● 9029 570747-7

**Debussy** Children's Corner etc **François**

Warner Classics ● 9029 580177-9

**'Music is Life'** Růžicková

EuroArts ● 206 4371

**Gade** *Erlkönigs Tochter* **Concerto**

Copenhagen / Mortensen

DaCapo ● DAC-LP003

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# BOX-SET *Round-up*

**Rob Cowan** has been listening to some worthwhile multi-CD bargains

## *Less is more*

**N**ow that's what I call a hammer blow!' I mused, having been virtually pinned to the wall by the explosive thuds that twice shatter the finale of **Mahler's** Sixth under Michael Gielen, as part of a complete symphony cycle. The Sixth is one of many highlights in the set, which features the SWR Symphony Orchestra Baden-Baden und Freiburg in a series of performances that combine intelligence with a keen understanding of the music's singular emotional climate. The Sixth's opening movement is truly *Allegro energico, ma non troppo*, which means you feel the full force of its arguments, and no rushing. The Third has a genuine sense of scale and the Ninth, recorded in 2003 and represented on both CD and DVD (the latter a first release) traces alternating moods of troubled repose and neurotic collapse, which is quite overwhelming in the first movement's tumbledown principal climax, while the opening moments of the last movement could hardly have been more beautifully played.

The other first releases are *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* with the baritone Peter Mattei and the *Rückert-Lieder* with the mezzo Elisabeth Kulmann, the former especially distinctive in the dynamic curve of Mattei's singing and the way Gielen points and shapes the orchestral line. Also included, Deryck Cooke's third version of the Tenth (we're additionally given the Irwin Ratz edition of the first movement *Adagio* which runs to 22'13" as opposed to Cooke's 24'32"). The *Resurrection* (No 2) was recorded at the Hans-Rosbaud studio and is a little diffuse sound-wise, though the climaxes roar loudly enough and the 35-minute finale is expertly paced, both in terms of what we hear and what we don't, ie the interlinking pauses. I'd rate Gielen's Mahler alongside Kubelík's and Haitink's as being an ideal case of 'less is more' which with Mahler means that the emphasis ricochets back from the rostrum to the score, though the musical impact never lessens. And that surely is how it should be.

Volume 5 of SWR's Gielen Edition (recorded 1967–2014) is shared between **Bartók** and **Stravinsky**. Back in 1959 Gielen recorded Bartók's Second Piano Concerto

with György Sándor (for Vox, 3/60) whereas the 1973 version included here features Robert Leonardy, whose crisp, orderly playing style more put me in mind of Géza Anda. Other Bartók fare includes a dark-hued account of the whole of *The Miraculous Mandarin* ballet (2007) which captures the work's innate sense of tragedy (and compassion) to perfection – drama rather than rhythmic drive, I'd say – as well as *The Wooden Prince Suite* (sounding quite Wagnerian), the Four Pieces, Op 12 (charged with atmosphere), Dance Suite (good rather than exceptional), the First Violin Concerto (Christian Ostertag, fiery in the second movement), and demonstrably macho accounts of the Concerto for Orchestra and *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*. The Stravinsky includes the three mature

## I'd rate Gielen's Mahler alongside Kubelík's and Haitink's for 'less is more'

symphonies (...in C and ...in Three Movements being especially memorable), *Agon* (superb), *Canticum sacrum*, *The King of the Stars*, a colourful if not always pristine *Pulcinella* with Edda Moser, Werner Hollweg and Barry McDaniel, *Requiem Canticles* and the *Huxley Variations* which is preceded by an amusing talk by Gielen himself (in German). The booklet usefully quotes Stravinsky on serial music.

More Russian music arrives courtesy of Warner Classics and Vladimir Ovchinnikov's 1991–3 set of **Prokofiev's** sonatas, plus the Toccata and nine pieces from *Cinderella*. Especially impressive among the latter is the 'Quarrel' with its kicking syncopations but in the sonatas I'd say that Ovchinnikov scores highest where the light floods in. The opening of the Seventh bounces along nicely but the finale lacks drive. Then again the more poetic aspects of Sonatas Nos 6 and 8 are well handled (their slow movements especially) but the opening of No 3 is hardly *Allegro tempestoso*. The romantic



worlds of Sonatas Nos 1 and 2 emerge much as they should do but perhaps best of all is the Ninth, written for Sviatoslav Richter who, according to Julian Haylock's excellent booklet note, abandoned initial reservations and with the passing years grew to love the work. Ovchinnikov helps us to understand why. A good starter pack I'd say, to be supplemented in time with greater performances of individual sonatas.

Dmitri Shostakovich's First Concerto (piano soloist Roustem Saïtkoulov) turns up in the context of a 15-CD set devoted to the gifted trumpeter **Eric Aubier** who entered Maurice André's class at the age of 14. Indé Sens' collection runs from Baroque concertos (often rather glumly accompanied), to contemporary works (Jolivet and Tomasi come off particularly well) and a whole host of miniatures, Aubier playing trumpet, cornet à pistons or bugle. He certainly makes a regal and often beautiful sound, generally attested to by this generous and musically varied collection of performances. **G**

### THE RECORDINGS

**Mahler** Symphonies, etc – Gielen Edition, Vol 6  
SWR SO / Gielen

SWR Music **B** 17 SWR19042CD

**Bartók, Stravinsky** – Gielen Edition, Vol 5  
SWR SO / Gielen

SWR Music **B** 6 SWR19023CD

**Prokofiev** Piano Sonatas **Ovchinnikov**  
Warner Classics **B** 3 9029 57398-5

**'La Trompette en France'** Aubier  
Indé Sens **B** 15 INDE102

# REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings



## Styles on the rostrum: the great and the good

Few shellac stars in the recordings firmament have shone more brightly or for a longer period than the heavenly match that is **Sergey Rachmaninov** playing his own Piano Concerto No 2 with the Philadelphia Orchestra under **Leopold Stokowski** in 1929. Those who know this indelible classic may well be able to spot differences between alternative takes, so it's a rare privilege to have access to two performances principally made up of minutely contrasting takes from the main sessions. Put briefly, whenever metal masters became too worn to use, RCA (Victor) would substitute the takes that Rachmaninov favoured with cleaner alternatives. As producer and engineer Mark Obert-Thorn says in his note for Pristine's latest reissue, 'Thus, for 45 of its 89 years in the catalog (1942 to 1987), entire generations only got to know this performance from the substitute takes.' It was only in 1987 'that the original takes were first reissued on CD by RCA'. Of course, countless other labels have also reissued the same, but now it's great to have access to 'two' performances – different apart from the beginning of the slow movement – plus a third take for the middle section of the finale. And the manner of those differences? Small, but noticeable: tiny alterations in articulation, tempo, dynamics, orchestral attack, timing, even phrasing – enough to suss that what you're listening to is in some cases not quite what you already know. The transfers are extremely fine throughout, and the CD tracking is arranged so that you can either listen straight through or programme this or that take in the context of an individual movement as a whole.

Staying in the US with a Russian slant, Pristine's **Fabien Sevitzky** (Koussevitzky's nephew) series continues with symphonic dance music in recordings made in 1942 and 1953 with his Indianapolis SO. The trio of Brahms Hungarian dances opens very broadly with No 1 in G minor followed by an arrangement of No 3 in F which incorporates a Disneyesque glockenspiel. In Dvořák's (slightly cut) *Slavonic Dance*

No 8 the timpani part appears to have been tampered with; and is that a harp at 2'08"? Sevitzky's busy way with Enescu's *Romanian Rhapsodies* (No 1 especially) can't compare with George Georgescu, Constantin Silvestri or Antal Dorati, and his *Gayaneh* Suite by Khachaturian is safely routine in comparison with, say, Gennady Rozhdestvensky's (in Leningrad), Zdeněk Chalabala's, Alfred Newman's and Dorati's.

On the other hand, **Serge Koussevitzky** comes across as a true master in Beethoven's Symphonies Nos 1 and 6, even though their first movement exposition repeats are omitted. Beyond an imprecise opening pizzicato chord, No 1 (with the ORTF National Orchestra in 1950) is vital and fiery, the Scherzo especially. The *Pastoral* (with the Boston SO, 1943) cuts a profile that's similar to Koussevitzky's 1928 Victor recording of the work with the same orchestra, the 'Storm' in this case a real lightning strike and the finale gaining in joyfulness as it proceeds. Both recordings are 'first releases' and sound better than might be expected.

Another first release featuring a fêted maestro arrives via Audite as part of its Lucerne Festival series: **Wilhelm Furtwängler** conducts the Swiss Festival Orchestra in Schumann's *Manfred* Overture – a dark, malleable performance that rages or relaxes according to the dictates of the moment. Schumann's Symphony No 4 was also on this August 26, 1953, concert programme, and it's fascinating to compare it with Furtwängler's famous Berlin Philharmonic recording (DG) from a few weeks earlier. The overall timing is more or less identical, as is the interpretative approach, but the contrast between 'studio' and 'live' is at its most marked in the transition to the finale, where the Swiss performance – though comparatively raw in tone – generates more tension. The third work is Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony, and here there are many Furtwängler-led alternatives, some darker-hued than this one, though few (if any) achieve such an overwhelming sense of release at the close of the first movement (from 14'13"). The transfers are superb.

Parallels between Furtwängler and **Hans Knappertsbusch** are more superficial than actual, Brahms's Third Symphony serving as a useful point for comparison. Knappertsbusch's 1962 account with the Cologne RSO is the gnarled base of a massive oak, whereas Furtwängler is like an eagle taking flight from the oak's highest branch, especially in the opening. Knappertsbusch's finale is proudly implacable, the tempo uncommonly broad – but the power of it! As to the *Haydn* Variations, not everyone will take to Knappertsbusch's lugubrious statement of the principal theme, nor the ponderous tempos chosen for most of the ensuing variations, but it has a cumulative impact after a fashion. Géza Anda is both forceful and elegant in Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 3, and if elegance wasn't generally Knappertsbusch's bag on this occasion he put his marmoreal side on hold for a well-proportioned accompaniment. The mono sound is perfectly acceptable.

### THE RECORDINGS



**Rachmaninov**  
Piano Concerto No 2  
Rachmaninov *pf* Philadelphia  
Orchestra / Stokowski  
Pristine Audio © PASC521



**Brahms, Dvořák, Enescu,  
Khachaturian**  
Indianapolis SO / Sevitzky  
Pristine Audio © PASC520



**Beethoven** Symrs Nos 1 & 6  
ORTF Nat Orch; Boston SO /  
Koussevitzky  
Pristine Audio © PASC522



**Beethoven** Symphony No 3  
**Schumann** Manfred Overture.  
Symphony No 4  
Swiss Fest Orch / Furtwängler  
Audite © 2 AUDITE23 441



**Beethoven, Brahms, Weber**  
Anda *pf* Cologne RSO /  
Knappertsbusch  
Orfeo © 2 C916172A





Leopold Stokowski's collaboration with Rachmaninov can now be heard in a new light

## Cleveland's first maestro

Pristine has reissued recordings by Kiev-born **Nikolai Sokoloff**, first conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra, whose highly distinctive premiere shellac set of Rachmaninov's Symphony No 2 has already been reissued on CD by the orchestra itself. The composer's own textual cuts and amendments are quite different from Eugene Ormandy's alterations, which served as standard at least until the taste for Urtext editions set in. Sokoloff's performance has pace, drive and passion, much like those of Artur Rodziński in 1945 (New York Philharmonic) and Alfred Wallenstein in 1960 (Los Angeles Philharmonic). This was very much Rachmaninov's way with his own orchestral works, and as played in New York by the Cleveland Orchestra in 1928, the music never sounds tawdry, sentimental or overblown.

The recordings here fall into three groups: the acousticals of 1924; the 1926 'Light-Ray' electricals; and the more regular electrical sessions of 1928, which (as well as the Rachmaninov) include a characterful Schubert *Unfinished* with its first-movement exposition repeat intact (surely a gramophone first). The rest of the repertoire is basically lighter fare, the surprisingly vivid acousticals including a truncated *1812 Overture* – a piece that also turns up on a vividly recorded 'Light-Ray' in a performance full of vigour. Selections by Nicolai, Saint-Saëns and Halvorsen are of a similar standard, though there are others that are woefully distorted soundwise. Sokoloff scored where Seitzky fell short – on the personality front; and if these are hardly gramophone classics, they're surely among the best orchestral records of the period.

## THE RECORDING



**'Nikolai Sokoloff and the Cleveland Orchestra: Complete Recordings'**  
Pristine Audio (P) (C) PASC524

## Richter at his greatest

It's rare to find a piece that within a mere two minutes encapsulates the art of the performing interpreter, but such is the case with **Sviatoslav Richter** and the Brahms Intermezzo Op 119 No 3, where stormy attack and delicate filigree make for a striking musical mini-drama. Richter's Op 119 constitutes four of 20 selections from the pianist's 'live' recorded legacy that are new to CD, the others including Brahms's two cello sonatas with Rostropovich which suffer compromised sound quality (the cellist is prominent sometimes to the point of obliterating the pianist). The main composers represented are Brahms and Schumann, and like the previous sets in the series (Beethoven: PH16030, 12 CDs; and Schubert: PH17005, 10 CDs) this one includes both live and more familiar studio recordings. In this case we're treated to American performances of Brahms's Piano Concerto No 2 that could hardly be less alike, both from 1960: the first, a well-known studio production with Erich Leinsdorf and the Chicago SO, relatively cool and beautifully recorded; the second a staggering live performance with the Boston SO under Charles Munch which is impulsive, fiery, grand (the first and third movements notably broader than in Chicago) and at times charged with a sense of mystery. It shows evidence of a true rapport between

soloist and conductor and is without question one of the great performances of this piece – and surely the very best we have from Richter. The Schumann trawl includes a first release of *Faschingsschwank aus Wien* from 1962, again, it's fabulous playing, though the recording suffers some sporadic if distant crosstalk. *Dichterliebe* and other Schumann songs with soprano Nina Dorliak are models of sensitive interpretation, even if the voice is just a little shrill; and a performance of the *Études symphoniques* from Kiev in 1958 is, like the Boston Brahms concerto, an unmissable treat, with playing that combines digital dexterity and intense expressiveness. This is a wonderful set.

## THE RECORDING

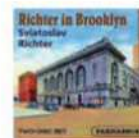


**Brahms, Schumann, Reger**  
Richter *pf et al*  
Hänssler Profil (S) (C) PH17067

## Richter in Brooklyn

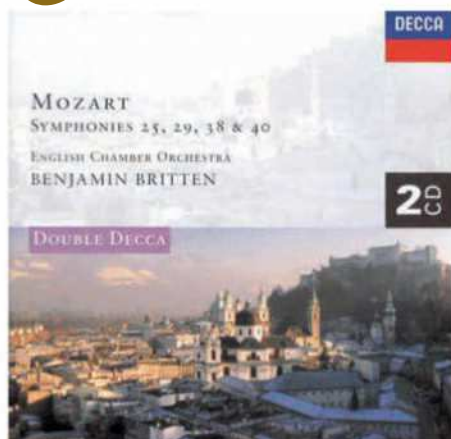
'Brooklyn' here has twofold significance: Richter is in recital at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in April 1965; and the Piano Concerto by one of Brooklyn's most celebrated musical sons, George Gershwin, is played by Richter with sassy deliberation in June 1993 supported by the Latvian National SO under jazz violinist Paul Mägi. The mostly previously unreleased recital opens with Beethoven's Piano Sonata No 18, where the galloping finale flies off like a rocket. And there's an account of No 31 where the dreamy opening *Moderato cantabile molto espressivo* morphs into an unusually emphatic *Allegro molto*. In Richter's hands, Mendelssohn's *Variations sérieuses* vies in its dramatic impact with Horowitz's (RCA), and Brahms's G minor Rhapsody compares with Schnabel's (Warner). Prokofiev's Piano Sonata No 2 is remarkable above all for its powerful finale, that insistent single-note interjection anticipating in Richter's hands the ferociousness of the 'War' Sonatas, and there's memorable Ravel and Rachmaninov. But be warned, the solo recital was recorded from within the audience, so that although the piano sound is more than acceptable, occasional nearby coughs or shuffles are disproportionately loud. Otherwise, this is a memorable release.

## THE RECORDING



**'Richter in Brooklyn'**  
Richter *pf* Latvian National SO / Mägi  
Parnassus (B) (C) PACD96061/2

# Classics RECONSIDERED



**Geraint Lewis and David Thresher** revisit Britten's 1968 recording of Mozart's Symphony No 40, with a little help from the archive at the Red House in Aldeburgh



## Mozart

Symphony No 40 in G minor, K550

English Chamber Orchestra / Benjamin Britten  
Decca

In several ways this is a historic record – the first to appear from the Maltings Concert Hall at Snape and the first version of No 40 to appear (in this country at least) with every single repeat observed. It was at the 1967 Aldeburgh Festival – just after the Maltings was opened by the Queen – that Britten startled us all with his new perspective on the G minor Symphony, and it was not surprising he went on to make a record. There is no doubt when the whole work lasts over 37 minutes, and the slow movement alone lasts 16, or roughly as long as the *Eroica* Funeral March, that the weight of Mozart's achievement is underlined. One no longer thinks of it as an expression of 18th-century manners, but as a visionary argument, far ahead of its time, divorced even from any period.

Whether it is a good idea to have a record with so much repeated material is another matter, and I am inclined to go

along with Daniel Barenboim (HMV, 8/68) who decides the issue of repeats on relative musical weight. He sees the first movement as the main prop of the argument. Under Britten's scheme the first movement, even with exposition repeat (7'40"), is less than half the length of the slow movement, relatively far too short. The finale too with both halves repeated is longer than the first movement, and so adds to the controversial balance of time-length.

But whatever one's feelings in principle, one could hardly miss the high individuality and superb sense of drama in Britten's reading, one of the most vital versions of the work ever to be put on record. I can imagine that many will complain of Britten's being too individual. The most obvious instances of mannerism are the agogic pauses or 'commas' that from time to time he inserts idiosyncratically – in the first movement before the last descending phrase of the second subject (illogical when you have had that phrase repeated several times already) and in the slow movement at bar 15 (similarly later) when the two semiquaver

rests are unnaturally lengthened. I confess that the very length of the slow movement finally makes me a little impatient with these and other pauses. Britten's marked rallentandos at the end of each half also come to irritate, for at the very end after 16 minutes Britten treats us to one of the most prolonged rallentandos I have ever heard in Mozart. Such treatment can be marvellous in a live performance (and always is in Britten's at Aldeburgh) but on record even in a spontaneous-sounding performance, the result is questionably effective.

I can imagine many 'hi-fi' addicts buying this record just for the glory of 'the Snape Sound', and I look forward to many more Decca recordings done at the Maltings. Many years ago Decca issued a record of Britten playing a Mozart piano concerto at Aldeburgh, but this record far more satisfyingly conveys the highly individual flavour of Britten's Mozart. One may not always like it, but it is virtually impossible to be bored – even with those massive slow-movement repeats. **Edward Greenfield (10/68)**

**Geraint Lewis** It's hard to believe when listening to it again now that Decca's classic K550 with the ECO and Britten was made exactly half a century ago, at the very end of May 1968.

**David Thresher** Well indeed, the sound is so vivid that it seems to take us right to the heart of the wonderful new Snape Maltings acoustic from those very opening bars on murmuring violas.

**GL** But looking back, this recording is especially valuable in being one of the few actually made in the original Maltings – as it was before the tragic fire.

**DT** What was the chronology exactly? I wasn't even born when it happened!

**GL** Well, the hall was opened in June 1967 by the Queen and exactly two years later it was burnt out after the opening night of the 1969 festival. But by June 1970 it had risen phoenix-like from the ashes and Her Majesty returned to open it again. This recording from 1968 therefore enshrines a short-lived period – and so despite the improvements made with the immediate rebuilding, there is nevertheless a particular poignancy in being able to hear that special sound which I well remember causing such a stir at the time.

**DT** We know that Britten had conducted Symphony No 40 in the new hall as early as June 1967, as part of the first Aldeburgh Festival held there, so maybe it isn't surprising to find that this recording seems to capture the spontaneity of a live event – despite being made under studio conditions.

**GL** The ECO was effectively the festival's orchestra-in-residence so the players had got to know Britten well over many years – and they must have relished the miraculous new building as much as he did. And he must have inspired them in a way that few conductors could (we have ample





Benjamin Britten recorded Mozart's Symphony No 40, complete with all the repeats, exactly 50 years ago

testimony of this), so a recording just a year later would have easily recaptured the special way that he wanted this symphony to go.

**DT** And we know that he had very clear ideas about that from our researches in the Red House archive – where the score he used for conducting the recording is housed, meticulously notated with phrasing, dynamic and repeat markings.

**GL** Isn't it touching, too, that the score he used was actually a present given to him in 1959 by Imogen Holst – her grandfather Adolph von Holst's own conducting score.

**DT** Yes, the old Breitkopf & Härtel edition with the two staves Mozart revised for oboes and clarinets printed above the original version minus clarinets – and Britten takes care to pencil in the changes on the main score just in case he should miss something in the heat of the moment!

**GL** And you also see Holst's blue-pencil conducting pointers which in places Britten has crossed out violently.

**DT** The main area where they differ markedly is in the matter of repeats – Holst observed the minimum, whereas Britten makes a major point of taking every one that Mozart marked.

**GL** And in so doing, obviously discombobulating Ted Greenfield entirely! He, of course, couldn't feel the score as Britten did – and it says a lot that he looks to the rather blander Barenboim recording for a 'conventionally' structured account – as if every symphony of the period had to have movements of roughly equal length in order to 'balance', and you just observed repeats (or not) in order to shoehorn the music into the required 27-minute time mould.

**DT** Mozart, ironically, was the perfect master of balance as also of drama so that he creates an internal balance within each movement that Britten captures instinctively. But Britten was also breaking new ground for the time exactly because he did take every repeat – I think he was the first conductor to do so on disc, in fact.

**GL** Well Britten was a visionary and Greenfield just a critic! But I for one will never forget that extraordinary frisson at the end of the slow movement when the development comes back with a sinister undertow; as a 12-year-old when I first heard the LP it was a hairs-on-the-back-of-the-neck moment, and it still has that effect, even though I now know about Mozart's intuitive use of the golden section in his construction!

**DT** It's funny, that – because Britten's score is like reading a short-hand version of this performance. All the so-called idiosyncrasies that Greenfield finds are there and written in with care, just as they are in his earlier pocket score ...

**GL** ... which he used for his one earlier Aldeburgh Festival performance in 1953 – but when the 'controversial' second repeats weren't taken!

**DT** Yes – and that's where it's interesting to put this 1968 version in context. Can we look at it from the perspective of the early- or period-instrument phenomenon which was just around the corner at the time?

**GL** This is still in effect the era of big-band Mozart from the likes of Böhm and Klemperer, with big string sections and minimal repeats – the fascinating Richard Strauss version with the Staatskapelle Berlin from the 1920s shows how little had actually changed – and in truth we have comparatively little idea of what 'authentic' means in such a context.

**DT** In fact, Britten and the smaller ECO are clearly favouring an approach which might have been perceived as trying to get closer to Mozart, and this comes across particularly in his approach to the wind instruments, which Britten makes a particular point of emancipating here.

**GL** In a later era you would find Roger Norrington probably doubling the speed of the slow movement – but you nevertheless understand completely the expressive reason for Britten's tempo here. And he does nothing remotely as perverse as Nikolaus Harnoncourt's wilful rhythmic distortion in the finale's development – so whose authenticity is truly authentic in any case?

**DT** I'm more than happy to accept this insight from one great composer into another – it stands outside the minutiae of any limited period as a great artistic document in its own right. **G**

# Books



Hugo Shirley admires a detailed study of the poets set by Brahms:

*'Hermann Allmers, the poet of one of Brahms's best-known songs, "Feldeinsamkeit", didn't much like the composer's setting'*



Nigel Simeone learns a lot from Stravinsky's correspondence:

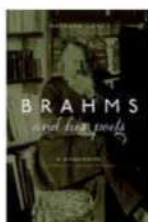
*'Stravinsky and Boulanger were both exiles, and Boulanger's anguish at the fall of France makes for heartbreaking reading'*

## Brahms and his Poets

By Natasha Loges

Boydell Press, HB, 496pp, £50

ISBN 978-1-7832-7236-5



In her introduction to this definitive, exhaustively researched volume, Natasha Loges swiftly dismisses the old idea that Brahms was one of those Lieder composers who cared little about what he set. Those who have voiced the offending view are named and shamed in footnotes that, here as well as throughout the book, offer eloquent testimony to the wealth of research that informs Loges's work. The very book itself, though, goes on as eloquently as possible to demonstrate the seriousness and depth of Brahms's relationship with poetry, as well as showing the extent of his reading.

He didn't limit himself to the greats or those in his social circle – although he certainly set several poets in each category – but ranged wildly across the literary landscape. And the very broadness of that ranging is perhaps what helped him gain a reputation for lacking sophistication, especially among English-speaking listeners unwilling to explore the figures who populated that landscape. Anyone following, say, Hyperion's ongoing survey of the songs will be all too aware of this variety. There are dozens of von Fallersleben, von Schacks and von Schenkendorfs for every Goethe.

Graham Johnson's notes for that series have been detailed – and he provides an enthusiastic Foreword to the present volume – but Loges goes several steps further, offering as much an encyclopaedia as a handbook. After the preliminaries we get an index of all the songs published in Brahms's lifetime, arranged by opus number, followed by a table of poets' lifespans, a little awkwardly spread out over four pages. There's a map of the German empire. A map showing 'poets' main area(s)

of activity' and movements around and about, however, takes a bit of unravelling.

Then we get on to the nitty-gritty: nearly 400 pages going through Brahms's poets themselves – 'from Willibald Alexis to Josef Wenzig'. And that first entry on Alexis gives an idea of the level of loving detail Loges goes into. Alexis is the poet of just one Brahms song, 'Entführung', Op 97 No 3, plus a duet – solo songs are listed in bold at the start of each entry, duets and the like noted for convenience and context above them. He nonetheless gets five pages, including a detailed 'further context', which shows how he fits into the broader literary environment.

Hermann Allmers, the poet of 'Feldeinsamkeit', Op 86 No 2, gets the same for his entry, but with just half a page on the song itself, before we go into the 'further context', which is full of several fascinating little tidbits. He didn't, for example, much like Brahms's setting of his poem – one of the composer's best-known songs – declaring a preference for one by a certain Gerhard Focken. Alas we learn that Loges was unable to find this alternative setting, but her discussion of Allmers's attitude raises fascinating questions about authorial property and the very aesthetics of song-writing.

Reading these biographical vignettes you might also, like me, find yourself wanting to head out and explore the other works of these authors: Allmers's *Römische Schledertage* ('one of the most popular Italian travelogues of its day'), for example; or the writings of Friedrich Bodenstedt, poet of the early 'Lied', Op 3 No 4 (as well as, among others, Grieg's 'Ein Traum'), and early translator of Pushkin, Lermontov and Turgenev. It's a refreshingly egalitarian volume, too: though Georg Friedrich Daumer, for example, was poet of nearly 20 songs, he gets just 10 pages. But this only emphasises the admirable way in which Loges sticks to her brief.

For this is not a volume that sets out to give commentary on each song, even though of course we do get a fair bit of that in passing, always carried out with insight.

The focus is as the title suggests, offering first and foremost a resource for those interested in the poets and their world. And the fact that these are of course poets also set by others makes the volume an invaluable resource for anyone interested in Lieder more broadly.

Boydell's presentation is utilitarian rather than luxurious – a sturdy casewrap hardcover rather than cloth binding – and be warned that the print is not quite as solid a black as one might like. But this is an extremely useful and endlessly fascinating book, which should be an invaluable volume for performers and listeners alike. It's an enormously impressive achievement, not just in the extent of its research but also in managing to present all that research clearly and engagingly. **Hugo Shirley**

## Nadia Boulanger and the Stravinskys

A Selected Correspondence

Edited by Kimberly A Francis

University of Rochester Press, HB, 348pp, £75

ISBN 978-1-5804-6596-0



The correspondence between Nadia Boulanger and Igor Stravinsky – two of the great musical minds of the 20th century – makes for captivating reading and most of it is published here for the first time. Since many of the letters relate to major Stravinsky works, there is much to be learnt here. In 1938, for instance, the correspondence is rich in discussion of the *Dumbarton Oaks* Concerto for which Boulanger acted as broker between Mr and Mrs Robert Woods Bliss and Stravinsky. Boulanger also conducted the work's world premiere at Dumbarton Oaks on May 8, 1938. Other works discussed at length include the *Symphony of Psalms*, the *Symphony in C* and *The Rake's Progress*.





Nadia Boulanger and Stravinsky in Hollywood in 1945

As well as presenting the correspondence between Boulanger and Stravinsky, this book reveals another side to their relationship: her friendship with other members of the family, particularly Stravinsky's sons Théodore and Soulima. As Kimberly Francis puts it in her introduction, Théodore's correspondence 'served as an outlet for his frustrations and a source of comfort' and reveals 'the role Boulanger played as a sort of adopted family member'. In the book's later chapters, the sense of exclusion felt by some members of Stravinsky's family is movingly confided to Boulanger. Stravinsky and Boulanger were both exiles in the US during the Second World War, and Boulanger's anguish at the fall of France makes for heartbreaking reading. She wrote in 1941: 'I didn't know how much I loved France, how I need her, and how, in her weakness, I feel she is great ... What have we done with this heritage that was our honor and demanded our responsibility? We suddenly realize when waking up from such an awful nightmare ... that we do not have enough tears to offer up to God.'

The first volume of Robert Craft's *Stravinsky: Selected Correspondence* (London, 1982) contained a group of Stravinsky's letters to Nadia Boulanger but none from Boulanger to Stravinsky. In this new book, the correspondence can be appreciated in

full. Reading it is an absorbing experience – poignant in the later years when letters were still written but the warmth had largely gone, particularly on Stravinsky's part. Francis argues (convincingly) that 'questions of who is behind the words found in these letters [from Stravinsky] echo throughout this chapter'. It's clear that Francis means Craft, and in the introduction she says that this book 'seeks to ameliorate the image of Boulanger constructed by Craft's editorial work'. As well as presenting Boulanger in a subservient role, Craft wrote that the period of the closest association between Boulanger and Stravinsky (1929–1938) 'is not documented in epistolary form'. The 30-page opening chapter of this new book amply refutes that claim.

Each chapter includes a valuable context-setting introduction, and there are annotations to explain references in letters. Just occasionally a bit more archeology would have produced more useful results. For example, a letter from Boulanger in December 1964 has a passage underlined by Stravinsky: 'Here, Dirk [Derrik] Olsen understood Abraham and Isaac, a very good impression. Le Roux and the orchestra are very good. How you were missed.' Francis's footnote reads: 'This reference is a mystery to me, and possibly to its recipients too, given the underlining.' There's no mystery: the Swiss singer Derrik Olsen and Maurice

Le Roux gave a performance of *Abraham and Isaac* in Paris in December 1964, a concert described to Stravinsky not only by Boulanger but also by Nicolas Nabokov who wrote to Stravinsky on January 9, 1965, calling it 'an excellent performance'.

Such moments are few and far between: in general, the annotations illuminate the correspondence. A companion website includes the original French texts alongside translations, allowing searches by tag (see <https://digex.lib.uoguelph.ca/exhibits/show/boulangerandstravinskys>). What the website also demonstrates is the care with which the letters have been transcribed and translated. Francis's translations are usually fluent and though it's always easy to quibble about details, the availability of the original texts online allows French-speaking readers to make up their own minds. There are many differences in the translations by Craft and Francis of those letters included by Craft – and in every case I checked against the French originals, Francis is more faithful and more accurate.

This is an expensive book, but it is one that sheds new light on an important relationship between two exceptional personalities. Like Kimberly Francis's earlier book *Teaching Stravinsky: Nadia Boulanger and the Consecration of a Modernist Icon* (Oxford, 2015), it makes for very rewarding reading. **Nigel Simeone**

# THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

## Suk's *Asrael*

Written at a time of profound grief and loss for the composer, this large-scale symphony is not only technically intricate but also has an extraordinarily wide expressive range, says **Richard Whitehouse**

Few career-defining works have emerged out of such personal upheaval as Josef Suk's *Asrael*. A precocious composer, Suk (1874-1935) was the favourite pupil of Dvořák while studying at the Prague Conservatoire. His Serenade for strings (1892) spread his name across Europe and received endorsement from Brahms, while his *Fairy Tale* (1899-1900) – derived from incidental music to Julius Zeyer's *Radúz and Mabulena* – established his idiom of sensual harmony and unfettered lyricism. Ensuing pieces saw incremental change with little stylistic reassessment.

A major overhaul only came about with the death of those closest to him. That of Dvořák on May 1, 1904, led Suk to conceive of a large-scale symphony in commemoration. Begun early in 1905, it progressed rapidly, and he had finished the first three of a projected five movements when on July 6 his wife, Otilie (who was Dvořák's oldest surviving daughter), succumbed to heart failure at the tender age of 27. The distraught Suk did not resume work until 1906, when he discarded the 54 bars of a slow movement and completely reassessed his plans for the finale. As the composer himself later said, 'Do you understand what I had to go through before getting to the final C major? No, this is not just a work of pain; it is a work of superhuman energy.'

Completed on October 4 and dedicated 'to the exalted memory of Dvořák and Otilie', his symphony was first performed by Prague's National Theatre orchestra, conducted by Karel Kovařovic, on February 3, 1907. The reception was warm, but its technical and conceptual challenges

were evident from the beginning – not least to Suk, who thereafter focused on increasingly complex statements; *Asrael* was the first instalment of a tetralogy (otherwise consisting of *A Summer Tale*, *Ripening* and *Epilogue*) with deep autobiographical elements.

Although it was intended as Suk's Second Symphony in C minor (his First Symphony was composed in 1897-99) and was published as his Op 27, the work soon became generally known by its subtitle *Asrael*. The Angel of Death in the Hebrew Bible and in Islamic scripture, Asrael was seen by Suk as a harbinger of misfortune by whom one either is destroyed or emerges on to a new level of maturity. This latter was amply borne out in musical terms, though its achievement was one that Suk struggled to surpass and almost seemed to regret as his output lessened drastically in subsequent decades.

### THE STRUCTURE OF THE PIECE

The five movements of *Asrael* are divided into two parts, each ideally unfolding continuously. The first part consists of an expansive sonata design that grows out of, then returns to, its slow introduction, a speculative intermezzo with funereal overtones, and a tensely sardonic scherzo with a bittersweet trio. After a lengthy pause (not always observed by recordings), the second part comprises a slow movement more heartfelt for its concision; then, instead of the triumphal set of variations as envisaged, a fantasia-like finale builds to a climax before subsiding into the calmly consoling epilogue. Numerous ideas are derived from earlier pieces, notably an ominous motif on horns from Suk's music



Suk with his beloved wife Otilie, who died at 27

to *Radúz and Mabulena* and a sighing motif on strings from Dvořák's Requiem – thus placing *Asrael* within the context of an evolving Czech musical tradition.

The 19 recorded versions of *Asrael* range in length from 57 minutes (Weller) to 64 minutes (Kubelík) and divide into three groups: those by Czech orchestras and conductors (mainly earlier recordings made when *Asrael* was of largely national significance); those by non-Czech orchestras and conductors (a result of the expansion of recording in the CD era); and those by non-Czech orchestras with Czech conductors – the outcome of Czech artists able to work abroad following the collapse of Communism, as well as *Asrael*'s move from the periphery towards the centre of the repertoire.

### CZECH ORCHESTRAS AND CONDUCTORS

*Asrael* recordings start with **Václav Talich**, Chief Conductor of the Czech Philharmonic from 1919 to 1941. He assisted Suk with revisions to the score in 1919, but the problems with recording so intricate a piece, compounded by Talich's falling foul of the Nazi and Communist regimes, meant that making a record was not possible until 1952. Its well-focused mono sound belying the notoriously reverberant Rudolfinum (then the House of Artists), this situates *Asrael* at a crucial juncture between the symphonic thinking of Dvořák and Tchaikovsky and that of Mahler; this is particularly evident in the way it contains the music's emotional extremes within a balanced formal





The young Suk composed *Asrael* in response to the deaths of Dvořák in 1904 and of his wife a year later

structure. Still the benchmark recording, it represents an aesthetic untenable in an era that sought immediacy and impact over lucidity and poise, with playing of similarly 'old world' elegance and refinement.

It was inevitable that a performance of *Asrael* in the wake of the Soviet-backed invasion of Czechoslovakia would assume extramusical significance. The concert at the Royal Festival Hall, London, on November 13, 1968, by the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra and **Jiří Waldhans**

is one such performance, and confirms Waldhans as a conductor of formidable ability. Personal traits may be few, but the fervency of musicians having (to quote producer Geoffrey Terry) 'the realisation they were temporarily enjoying freedom' is tangible. It's hardly definitive, but it's a reading whose qualities are expressed undimmed.

Three decades elapsed between the first two studio recordings. Come the digital era, and *Asrael* was tackled in 1983 by

**Václav Neumann**, Chief Conductor of the Czech Philharmonic from 1968 to 1990. His reading is at its best in more combative sections of the outer movements, above all in the first's climactic onslaught, while lacking depth and repose in the more introspective passages. Well-balanced if unatmospheric sound abets the impression of an orchestra that is technically adept but possesses comparatively little of that individuality found in an earlier era.

**Jiří Bělohlávek** was no less an advocate of Suk. His first recording of *Asrael* (1991), from his short-lived first tenure as Chief Conductor of the Czech Philharmonic, is an idiomatic and lucid account, with playing of consistent finesse as heard in the spacious ambience of Prague Castle's Spanish Hall. Yet such warmth and opulence often undermine the music's visceral impact, which is emasculated within a haze of pastel-shaded rumination. No other recording makes it sound so alluring, but the sense of an emotional crisis being confronted is secondary at best.

There is no lack of immediacy in the no-longer-available 1992 recording from Vladimír Válek with the Prague RSO (Praga Digitals). A conductor notably at home in music of the inter- and post-war eras, Válek secures a lithe and incisive response – redolent of Shostakovich in its physicality – from an orchestra whose second-tier status is by no means a given. Unfortunately, the closely miked and rather airless studio sound reins in this music's expressive range and endows the more inward passages with an aridness stemming from neither conductor nor players. The performance deserved better.

If there was ever an 'honorary' Czech conductor, it was **Sir Charles Mackerras**, who was Principal Guest Conductor of the Czech Philharmonic from 1997 to 2003. Having studied with Talich in Prague (1947-48), Mackerras knew what this piece represented, but while his version (made in 2007) takes that of his mentor as its template, it also views *Asrael* as integral to 20th-century symphonism. Its scherzo is finely poised between malevolence and rapture, the *Andante* and *Adagio* amply evoke ominousness and heartache, and the outer movements generate enough momentum without rhetorical emphasis – the finale heading towards an epilogue that clinches the work's emotional trajectory by according it long-term focus. The Czech Philharmonic has rarely sounded so energised since Ančerl's era, and this



Talich (right), who assisted Suk in revisions to the score, with Ančerl: both made significant recordings

quality sets the seal on a reading that will not easily be surpassed.

### NON-CZECH ORCHESTRAS AND CONDUCTORS

Nothing by **Evgeny Svetlanov** lacked personality, as is proven in his 1993 account with the Russian (USSR) State Symphony Orchestra. Svetlanov sees *Asrael* as akin to Tchaikovsky's *Manfred* Symphony or Glière's *Ilya Muromets* Symphony, the outer movements having a cinematic sweep which leaves little room for more personal emotions. Equally spacious, the second and fourth movements lack impulsiveness while the scherzo is not free of indulgence. Heard in concert, this would gain an ovation, but on disc its limitations feel all too marked. The rather blowsy sound hardly helps.

Contrast this with the smooth and warmly spacious perspective accorded **Peter Schneider** and the Montpellier

Philharmonic Orchestra in 1996.

Suk's profile may never have been high in France, but *Asrael*'s cyclical form has tangible links with the symphonies of Franck and his school, as Schneider astutely reinforces in his finely proportioned reading. Mellifluous woodwind compensates for occasionally underpowered brass or less than full-bodied string tone, and this account exudes an appealing subtlety and understatement evidently appreciated by the Montpellier audience.

**Kirill Petrenko** was relatively little known when his 2002 performance of *Asrael* appeared, but on this evidence pundits might have taken notice sooner. There is nothing passive or restrained about this account, with the outer movements evincing a febrile intensity and the scherzo a truly malicious intent. Elsewhere, the lack of repose in more inward sections suggests that Petrenko had yet to take in this piece's full measure, with the fearlessly committed

playing from the orchestra of Komische Oper Berlin (of which Petrenko was then Music Director) audibly taxed beyond limits on occasion. This remains a reading of undeniable conviction and assuredly worth hearing, though should Petrenko choose to revisit the piece after taking the helm at the Berlin Philharmonic next year, the outcome ought to prove formidable.

The 2003 performance by **Leon Botstein** and the American Symphony Orchestra is notable for its consistency, hence the first movement's unfolding over a near unbroken pulse (as indicated by the score), or the similar continuity between scherzo and trio as enables greater emphasis on that fateful glance back to the intermezzo. Ensemble flaws may irk on repetition, as might a headlong rush to the final climax, but the epilogue is well sustained. Those opting for this download-only release will benefit from the American SO's customarily extensive and insightful annotations.

Had the Mackerras not appeared, several later recordings would rate more highly – not least **Vladimir Ashkenazy** with the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra (2008), a thoughtful and conscientious reading which renders the score with commendable accuracy and integrates the emotional extremes of both outer movements with admirable cohesion. Spacious and realistic, the SACD sound yet places the orchestra at a remove so that it seems underpowered at climaxes and lacking in weight or incisiveness elsewhere. This is a sympathetic but only intermittently convincing *Asrael*.

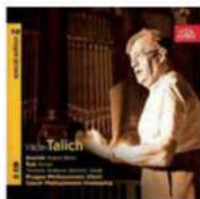
Perhaps the most surprising latter-day version is that by **Claus Peter Flor** with the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (also 2008). Flor recorded a Martinů cycle early in his career, and more recently Dvořák's last three symphonies, thus his empathy for Suk might be expected. What impresses most is his scrupulous attention to detail and unobtrusive rightness of tempo relations – particularly in the outer movements, which unfold with unbroken continuity; and the transition of the finale into the epilogue is both ethereal and

### THE BENCHMARK

**Czech Philharmonic / Václav Talich**

Supraphon © SU3830-2

With formal lucidity and expressive restraint, allied to orchestral playing already redolent



of a bygone era, Talich's reading combines fidelity to this score with an emotional sincerity borne of his long professional relationship with the composer.

### DYNAMIC CHOICE

**SWR Symphony Orchestra / Karel Ančerl**

SWR Classic © SWR19055CD

This live 1967 performance, released this year, finds Ančerl in electrifying form, galvanising



a German orchestra doubtless unfamiliar with the work to playing of real conviction and commitment. It's a significant and timely discovery.

### UNEXPECTED CHOICE

**Malaysian PO / Claus Peter Flor**

BIS © BIS-SACD1776

It may be less consistently intense than its rivals, but Flor's reading reaffirms his empathy



with Czech music as he secures a forthright and thoughtful response from his players. With the best sound of any version, this is a subtle and appealing option.



eloquent. Add the restrained intensity of the second and fourth movements, the latter exquisitely phrased at a never-sluggish tempo; a scherzo whose propulsion poses no problems of articulation; and SACD sound whose all-round perspective makes this the best-recorded version of any, and the outcome is an *Asrael* that bears comparison with the finest.

**Walter Weller** made his name as a conductor in recordings of early 20th-century symphonies, so it comes as little surprise that he tackled *Asrael* (2009). His is a relatively swift and no-nonsense traversal, capably rendered by the National Orchestra of Belgium, though with an erratically paced first movement, an oddly featureless *Andante* and an *Adagio* that lacks pathos. The scherzo is well articulated and the finale is not without conviction, though there is a generalised intensity about much of this reading which ultimately precludes a more personal or distinctive interpretation.

### NON-CZECH ORCHESTRAS WITH CZECH CONDUCTORS

**Karel Ančerl's** *Asrael* with the orchestra of South-West German Radio (1967) has only recently received official release. The aesthetic context here is one of Mahler and even Shostakovich as Ančerl shaves four minutes off Talich in a reading that views each part of the symphony as a seamless and cumulative continuity. Anguish and irony are grounded by a rhythmic tensility in which Ančerl had no peer, hence the lack of rapture in the scherzo's trio or tenderness in the *Adagio*. Yet the visceral power generated in the outer movements is its own justification, as is the finale's epilogue, which eschews transcendence for searching fulfilment. The German forces admit passing imprecisions (a 1971 account with the Cleveland Orchestra, which can be found on YouTube, is more secure technically though more distanced expressively), thereby making for a reading of manifest conviction. As is **Rafael Kubelík's** (intermittently available) 1981 *Asrael* with the Bavarian RSO (of which he was Music Director 1961-79), which exudes a long-breathed and slow-burning intensity; too much so with the first and third movements, where concern over phrasing and secondary detail inhibits ongoing flow and cumulative momentum such that the parts amount to a less-than-perfectly achieved whole. The second movement conveys a mesmeric stillness and the fourth an eloquence, both traits of any great interpretation; the finale builds effortfully to its climax, but the closing stages offer a benediction intensely felt. As also in late Kubelík performances of other works,



Ančerl shaves four minutes off Talich in a recording whose 'rhythmic tensility has no peer'

one's experience of the journey ultimately outweighs that of the arrival.

Nor is there anything equivocal about the 1990 recording from **Libor Pešek**, who championed Suk in the UK while Chief Conductor of the RLPO (1987-97). Directing with adroit balance between the methodical and the impulsive, his reading views the work in its entirety and without expressive contrivance. The middle movements are unerringly gauged, the scherzo arguably the best – in its alternation between viciousness and rapture – of any studio account; and the finale's

emotional charge is powerfully projected. It's a pity that the opening movement seems a little hesitant, hitting its stride only with the approach to the fateful culmination, and likely explained by the seven months between sessions. It's a fine version, then, though Pešek's *Asrael* is best heard in his incendiary performance at the 1991 BBC Proms – sadly never issued commercially.

**Jiří Bělohlávek's** second recording of *Asrael* (2008) saw him taking the BBC Symphony Orchestra (of which he was then Chief Conductor) to the

## SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

RECORDING DATE / ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1952 Czech PO / <b>Talich</b>	Supraphon (E) SU3830-2 (6/54*, 11/06)
1967 SWR SO / <b>Ančerl</b>	SWR Classic (E) SWR19055CD
1968 Brno PO / <b>Waldhans</b>	Orchestral Concert (E) CD7/2009
1981 Bavarian RSO / <b>Kubelík</b>	Panton (M) 81 1101-2011 (1/94)
1983 Czech PO / <b>Neumann</b>	Supraphon (S) 4 SU3864-2 (9/91*)
1990 RLPO / <b>Pešek</b>	Virgin/Erato (M) B 628530-2; EMI/Warner Classics (M) B 206873-2 (9/91*)
1991 Czech PO / <b>Bělohlávek</b>	Chandos (E) 2 CHAN9640 (5/92)
1993 Russian (USSR) St SO / <b>Svetlanov</b>	Russian Disc (E) RDCD11 011 (1/94)
1996 Montpellier PO / <b>Schneider</b>	Actes Sud (E) AT34105
2002 Orch of the Komische Op, Berlin / <b>K Petrenko</b>	CPO (M) 3 CPO555 009-2
2003 American SO / <b>Botstein</b>	American Symphony Orchestra (E) B ASO017
2007 Czech PO / <b>Mackerras</b>	Supraphon (E) SU4043-2 (6/11)
2008 Helsinki PO / <b>Ashkenazy</b>	Online (E) ODE1132-5 (5/09)
2008 BBC SO / <b>Bělohlávek</b>	Supraphon (M) 2 SU4095-2 (10/12)
2008 Malaysian PO / <b>Flor</b>	BIS (E) BIS-SACD1776 (11/09)
2009 Nat Orch of Belgium / <b>Weller</b>	Fuga Libera (E) FUG557 (2/10)
2013 Tokyo Metropolitan SO / <b>Hrůša</b>	Extón (M) B OVCL00564
2016 Essen PO / <b>Netopil</b>	Oehms (E) OC1865 (7/17)



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Mackerras and Talich, his mentor, in 1948; Talich's version served as a template for Mackerras in 2007

Prague Spring Festival for a performance appreciably more intense and involving than the one before. Tempos in the opening movement might not be as finely integrated as they could be, but there is little to fault in the inner movements (most notably the *Adagio*, which conveys *gravitas* without risk of indulgence) – while the finale is among the most spontaneous of any in the way it builds to a seismic climax and then subsides into an epilogue whose consolation is not unconditional. The orchestra gives its

collective all and this version gets a strong recommendation – while bearing in mind that Bělohlávek's 2014 performance with the Czech Philharmonic (currently available only on YouTube), with its tauter first movement, may yet (one can hope) be released commercially.

The most recent recordings are by Czech conductors of the younger generation (both students of Bělohlávek). **Jakub Hrůša** studied *Asrael* for his conducting final in Prague, his knowledge of and feeling for this piece evident in every

bar. That said, his 2013 account with the Tokyo Metropolitan SO is not an unqualified success: the opening movement unfolds a touch stolidly and at times portentously before it arrives at a culmination of visceral import. There is little to fault in what follows, though, even if the brass playing is not without blatancy at climaxes (where the recorded sound often borders on oppressiveness given the lack of ambience). This is certainly a performance to hear, but Hrůša has since given even finer readings in London and Berlin. When he revisits the piece on record, as he surely will, the results will likely be special indeed. So, too, might a remake from **Tomáš Netopil**. His *Asrael* with the Essen Philharmonic is the most recent recording (2016) and the first to utilise the new critical edition published by Bärenreiter, with its numerous textual amendments and clarifications. Otherwise, this is a forthright and assured reading – at its best in the second and fourth movements, which are sensitively realised, while otherwise lacking a degree of intensity. Responsive yet undemonstrative playing, and decent if dynamically constrained sound, reinforce the sense of an interpretation still in the making.

### LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The *Asrael* discography might be expanded as other conductors have their performances released – among them Vladimir Jurowski, who gave a fine account in London several years ago, and Simon Rattle, who performed this work with both the CBSO and the Berlin Philharmonic. Among current standout recordings, that from Mackerras must be the prime recommendation for its quality of execution, its manifest insights and, above all, its complete understanding of what the work represents for Czech symphonic thinking near the turn of last century and that which evolved in Europe over later decades. With its past and present in perfect accord, *Asrael* now faces the future as an integral part of the orchestral repertoire – where it has always belonged. **G**

### ULTIMATE CHOICE

**Czech Philharmonic / Sir Charles Mackerras**  
Supraphon © SU4043-2

Mackerras's devotion to Czech music is clear in this live recording from Prague. The orchestra



rekindles an excitement and personality found decades before.

No other version quite conveys the stature of *Asrael* as a seminal 20th-century symphony.



Devoted: Charles Mackerras's love of Czech music is undisputed in his live recording from Prague

# PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

Presenting live concert and opera performances from around the world, and reviews of archived music-making available online to stream where you want, when you want

## **St John's College Chapel, Cambridge & online** **Choir of St John's mark their latest CD launch with a live-streamed evensong, May 18**

The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge is soon to release the fifth disc on its distinctive imprint with Signum of music by Ralph Vaughan Williams, including the Mass in G minor (reviewed in this issue). On the day of its release Evensong is to be live-streamed from St John's College Chapel by Classic FM via Facebook, a first for both the choir and Classic FM. Music for the service will include Vaughan Williams's *O, clap your hands* as well as *Lord, thou hast been our refuge* and the hymn *Come down, O love divine*.

[facebook.com/ClassicFM/](https://facebook.com/ClassicFM/), [sjchoir.co.uk](https://sjchoir.co.uk)

## **Gothenburg Concert Hall & online**

### **Kent Nagano conducts Mahler's Third, May 19**

Mahler's Third Symphony makes up the entirety of this concert played by the Gothenburg Symphony under the baton of visiting conductor Kent Nagano, with the Gothenburg Symphonic Choir and – encouragingly from an educational perspective – the choir from the local Brunnsbo School. The contralto soloist is homegrown too – Anna Larsson.

[gse.se](https://gse.se)

## **Orchestra Hall, Detroit & online**

### **Jennifer Koh plays Chris Cerrone concerto world premiere, May 26**

Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* may be a major core work in this concert conducted by Leonard Slatkin, followed by Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. However, the programme as a whole is far from being run-of-the-repertoire-mill, because it opens with two world premieres by two of America's rising young composers. First, *Diamond Rain* for orchestra by Roshanne Etezady. Then a new Violin Concerto by Chris Cerrone, featuring Jennifer Koh as soloist. Plus, you can get a feel for these two composers' very individual voices beforehand if you so wish, because much of their music is streamed online. So, for Etezady in orchestral mood, try her three-movement *Anahita* recorded for Tresona Multimedia by the University of Michigan Symphony band. Then to get a feel for the feast of overlaid textures and sonorities in Cerrone's string writing, head to SoundCloud for his *High Windows* Concerto for String Quartet.

[dso.org](https://dso.org)

## **Würzburg Kaisersaal & online at BR-Klassik** **Camerata Salzburg and the Schumann Quartet, May 26**

Camerata Salzburg aren't so regularly to be spotted on UK shores, which is a shame because they're rather marvellous. Still, you can at least view them remotely this month, because BR-Klassik has done us the favour of live-streaming a particularly appealing concert they're performing as part of the Mozartfest Würzburg, directed by Hartmut Haenchen for which they're joined by the Schumann Quartet and clarinetist Annelien Van Wauwe. Actually, this concert will be a feast for the eyes before they've even played a note, because it's hosted by the lavish Baroque Keisesaal of Würzburg castle. As for the programme itself, this features Karl Amadeus Hartmann's Chamber Concerto for Clarinet, String Quartet and String Orchestra completed in 1935, sandwiched between two C major symphonies by Mozart: the *Il re pastore* Symphony and the *Jupiter*.

[br-klassik.de](https://br-klassik.de)

## **Staatsoper Munich & online**

### **New production of Janáček's The House of the Dead, June 26**

Janáček's powerful final opera depicting the harshness of life in a Siberian gulag returns to Bavarian Opera in a new production from Frank Castorf, conducted by Simone Young. You can see it in Munich between May 21 and

## ONLINE OPERA REVIEW

### **Sir Simon Rattle's last opera performance in Berlin, fresh from the Baden-Baden festival, before he steps down**



## **Wagner**

Rattle puts his years of experience conducting *Parsifal* in the pit, most recently at the Baden-Baden Easter Festival, to shape a forward-moving account that never falls back on stately pieties. In the Berlin Philharmonic's palette of transparent tones and often hushed dynamics, the forests of Monsalvat and Allemonde (home to

Golaud and Mélisande) have never seemed so adjacent.

The singers, too, are alive to an imagined dramatic context; the absence of music stands on the stage of the Philharmonie helps us as well as them. Expression and movement are restrained but always telling, especially in the work of Franz-Josef Selig as the opera's unreliable narrator, Gurnemanz. His monologues are gripping, challenging

accounts of lived and remembered history, not so tonally lustrous as recent interpreters such as René Pape or (from the younger generation) Georg Zeppenfeld, but the nearest we have just now to a Hans Hotter.

Fresh from Dmitri Tcherniakov's production at the city's Staatsoper, Nina Stemme is strong on the cursed and cursing sides of Kundry, less so as irresistible

seductress, though Evgeny Nikitin's virile Klingsor doesn't give her much to work with (or against). She and Stuart Skelton in the title-role build edge-of-seat tension during their long and tricky Act 2 duet; there is also a magnificently untrammelled, vocally sumptuous Amfortas from Gerald Finley, who together with Skelton ensures that the opera's climax arrives not on the gorgeously played Good Friday Meadow but drives through to the final, reconciling encounter between king and hero.

The Berlin Radio Choir are an impressively suave and uniform bunch of knights, almost too much so in Act 3. Their polished assurance notwithstanding, this is so much more than another stand-and-deliver concert *Parsifal*, and a fitting capstone to Rattle's tenure in Berlin.

**Peter Quantrill**

Available via various subscription packages to the Digital Concert Hall, from seven days (£9.90) to 12 months (£149), at [digitalconcerthall.com](https://digitalconcerthall.com)



October 26, but this one performance is also being live-streamed on StaatsoperTV, and will also be available afterwards. Singing the lead role of Aleksandr Petrovič Gorjančikov is Peter Rose, with a cast that also features Evgeniya Sitnikova, Aleš Briscein, Charles Workman and Bo Skovhus.

[staatsoper.de](http://staatsoper.de)

### Concours Musical International de Montréal

May 27 – June 7, 2018

Held since 2002 with an annually rotating discipline, this year's Concours Musical International de Montréal is open to singers, who can choose to compete in one or both of the Aria and Art Song divisions. Each of those divisions offers a first prize of \$30,000 plus a \$50,000 career development grant, and there's also a Pianist Award of \$10,000 up for grabs. All rounds will be live-streamed on the competition website, plus available on demand afterwards, and even if you don't see yourself as an expert in rising talent there are big names to hook you in beyond the usual frisson of competition excitement. For instance the orchestral rounds are accompanied by the Montreal Symphony Orchestra under Graeme Jenkins, while the jury includes *Gramophone's* 2017 Lifetime Achievement Award-winner Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, along with Dame Felicity Lott, Edith Bers and Ben Heppner, with CMIM co-founder and President André Bourbeau presiding.

[concoursmontreal.ca/voice](http://concoursmontreal.ca/voice),

[concoursmontreal.ca/live](http://concoursmontreal.ca/live)

### Herkulesaal, Munich & online

Eötvös conducts Lachenmann, June 8

Another one of those, 'we wouldn't be experiencing it before the advent of streaming' concerts, this one from the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra under Peter Eötvös is devoted to the music of the German composer Helmut Lachenmann, one of musical modernism's most revered figures and particularly known for his *musique concrète instrumentale*: that's a language that uses unconventional playing techniques such as scrapes and scratches in order to activate an instrument's entire sound capabilities. Lachenmann's direct, complex music is actually far more universally beautiful than that description might imply. This programme presents a nicely wide-ranging portrait too, opening with Pierre-Laurent Aimard playing the *Serynade* for piano, after which comes the *Marche fatale* for large orchestra, before the programme climaxes with *My Melodies* for Eight Horns and Orchestra.

[br-klassik.de](http://br-klassik.de)

### De Doelen, Grote Zaal, Rotterdam & medici.tv

Gala Concert from Joyce DiDonato and

Yannick Nézet-Séguin, June 9 & 10

[gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk)

## ONLINE VIDEO REVIEW

### A classical music video catalogue for Amazon Prime users



### Beethoven

For subscribers to Amazon Prime, the service that grants you 'free' delivery of your shopping, as well as access to Amazon's substantial video library, there are – tucked away on the Prime Video site – a number of channels that you can find under the heading 'Featured Channels'. One of these (nestling under 'More to Explore'), and which costs £5.99 per month, is Stingray Classical. It offers a large classical library embracing filmed concerts (symphonic, choral, instrumental, chamber and opera), documentaries and some dance. Many of the big names are here: Rubinstein, Abbado, Chailly, Lang Lang, Mutter, Fleming ...

A quartet of Beethoven films caught my eye: two of which place Beethoven's Ninth Symphony centre stage. The concert performance of the work is not as advertised on the site. Rather than being from the cycle that Claudio Abbado gave with the Berlin Philharmonic in Rome's Accademia di Santa Cecilia in 2001, it's a Philharmonie Berlin performance

This is a big one. In fact such a big one that by the time these two concerts actually happen it's likely that the only way you're going to have a seat on the inside is from your own home, via their live streams on [medici.tv](http://medici.tv). The reason is that this concert sees Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducting the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra for the very last time as Music Director (later this year he becomes Music Director of the Metropolitan Opera, alongside similar roles at the Philadelphia Orchestra and Montreal's Orchestre Métropolitain). Joined by Joyce DiDonato as soloist, the programme begins with the intimacy of Handel and Mozart arias, then moves through Boccherini arranged by Berio, and Bellini, before a thunderous climax in the shape of Respighi's *Pines of Rome*. Nice. [medici.tv](http://medici.tv)

from 2000. Quite swift, supple, energetic and beautifully controlled it moves inexorably toward the finale in which the two women soloists (Mattila and Urmann) are superb and the Swedish choruses are terrific. The other Beethoven Ninth provides the soundtrack for Maurice Béjart's 1964 ballet – filmed in Tokyo with the Israel

Philharmonic conducted under Zubin Mehta, with the combined forces of the Béjart company and the Tokyo Ballet. I could have done without Gil Roman's lengthy opening narration (in French), but once the music and dancing starts it's a mesmerising and characteristically imaginative journey from darkness to light. The finale, costumed in ochre, is wonderfully life-affirming.

A concert from the Ruhr Klavier-Festival in May 2007 finds Daniel Barenboim and the Staatskapelle Berlin in Beethoven's *Emperor* Concerto. It's the sort of music-making that's full of joy even though they must have played it together countless times.

And finally, the *Missa solemnis* from Dresden's architecturally magnificent Frauenkirche conducted by Fabio Luisi. Traditional in approach, and beautifully played and sung, this is a fine performance with some very classy solo singing. **James Jolly**

Available for Amazon Prime users for a monthly fee of £5.99, though a free week's trial is also offered.

### Philharmonie, Berlin & online

Rattle's Farewell to Berlin, June 20

In November 1987, a 32-year-old Simon Rattle made his debut with Herbert von Karajan's mighty Berlin Philharmonic in Mahler's Sixth Symphony (a recording of which has since been released by the orchestra). To conclude his tenure at the helm of this great German orchestra, Rattle returns to the same work. Of that earlier performance, he said 'I felt I was finding my voice on that day'; now with hundreds of concerts with the BPO under his belt, the comparison will be fascinating. Join conductor and orchestra in Berlin's Philharmonie, in person or online, for Rattle's last concert in the hall as Chief Conductor before handing over the baton to Kyrill Petrenko who takes over next year.

[digitalconcerthall.com](http://digitalconcerthall.com)

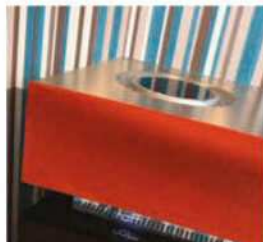
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# HIGH FIDELITY

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'Intelligent' headphones from a famous British name, Marantz's 'complete digital music source player', and is Wi-Fi convenience harming our sound?  
**Andrew Everard, Audio Editor**

## JUNE TEST DISCS



A scintillating account of Brahms's symphonies, in no small part due to the dynamics and detail of the 192kHz/24-bit Linn download.



A millennium of Venetian history in music, and it's as intriguing as it is totally involving in this 88.2kHz/24-bit download from Qobuz.

## Affordable studio style and cost-conscious cables

No shortage of new hi-fi launches this month – and there really is something for everyone

There's been a noticeable sense of affordability around in hi-fi of late, with some well-known ranges adding more cost-conscious models to attract new buyers to their products and bring in budget-minded upgraders.

Notable among these has been the arrival back in the UK of Danish speaker company Jamo with a keenly priced new range, Studio 8 **1**. In fashionably compact cabinets in an equally up-to-date range of finishes – black, walnut or white – the new models feature a selection of design features aimed at making them especially room-friendly. These include neat styling for the outrigger feet on the floorstanding models, front-venting ports to make the speakers easier to use in tight spaces and the use of WaveGuide technology to improve and enhance treble dispersion.

The range uses 25mm soft-dome tweeters, along with aluminised polyfibre mid-range and bass drivers. All the finishes have wood-grain accents and trim-rings to hide the driver fixings, while the grilles attach magnetically to leave a clean look when they are removed. White speakers are supplied with heather grilles, with black covers for the walnut and black models.

The range includes three standmount models, starting with the S 801 at £155 per pair, and three floorstanders, the top model being the S 809 at £625/pr, with the floorstanders also available as a home cinema system with an S 81 CEN speaker and a pair of the S 801s for surround duties. These systems start at £599 for the S 805 HCS, and the S 81 CEN and the larger S 83 CEN are joined by a pair of upwards-firing Dolby Atmos effects speakers, the S 8 ATM, at £200/pr.



magnet, but here it's combined with a less powerful ferrite magnet in a hybrid system for better control. The speakers, which stand 36cm tall, will be available in special Finnish birch finishes in either red or grey.



The range is completed by two active subwoofers, designed for use horizontally or vertically against walls or tucked away under furniture – prices for those start at £220 for the S 808 SUB.

Meanwhile, another well-known Danish speaker brand, Dynaudio, is celebrating a special anniversary: its new Special Forty speaker **2**, selling for £2999 a pair when it goes on sale in the next month or so, appropriately marks the company's 40th birthday. Described as 'the ultimate compact standmounter in its class', the new model uses a new Esotar Forty 28mm soft-dome tweeter, with extensive back-pressure control measures to ensure accurate movement and a DSR coating to the diaphragm. DSR? It stands for Dynaudio Secret Recipe, of course. The woofer is a Special Forty version of Dynaudio's classic 17W75 MSP model and shares with the tweeter the use of a neodymium

Talking of finishes, Tivoli has announced three new spring/summer colours for its little PAL BT portable DAB radio with Bluetooth **3**. It will now be available in Anise Flower, Lucite Green and Deep Ocean Teal, colours selected 'after careful consideration of global interior, fashion and product design trends'. They will be available on both the existing model at £185 and the upgraded PAL+ BT, which will sell for £229.

Atlas Cable has added a new interconnect to its range. Equator Integra **4** not only uses the same ultra-pure (99.999%) copper conductors found in more expensive Atlas models but has paid close attention to shielding to improve performance in environments prone to radio frequency interference – a topic discussed in this month's Audio Essay. Double screening is used within the white outer jacket; prices start from £100 for a 0.5m pair.

Finally, a somewhat loose definition of 'affordable'. Although the MT2 Precision Turntable is US high-end company McIntosh's lowest-priced turntable to date **5**, it's still £4995. The MT2 comes complete with a duraluminium tonearm with ceramic and sapphire bearings, and pre-installed high-output moving coil cartridge, meaning it's ready to use straight from the box. The belt-drive system uses a DC motor fed from an external power supply, an aluminium inner platter and a polyoxymethylene outer platter for vibration-suppression. **6**

## ● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

# Marantz ND8006

Aimed at being 'the complete digital music source player', the latest arrival from Marantz has both remarkable flexibility and fine performance on its side

The design team at Marantz is on something of a roll when it comes to high-quality digital audio products. Hot on the heels of the remarkable SA-10 SACD/CD/digital player (4/17) – complete with its 'DAC-less' design, drawing on both the company's history in bitstream technology and its commitment to DSD audio – comes the new ND8006. It's aimed rather lower down the price spectrum than the 'New Reference' player, selling for £1099 – the same price as the matching PM8006 amplifier – against the SA-10's £5999, but offers almost as wide a range of technology (plus a few extra features), along with plenty of evidence of input from the same designers and engineers.

Marantz coined that 'New Reference' label for the SA-10 and its partnering PM-10 amplifier, and the ND8006 has a claim of its own: this, we are told, is 'the complete digital music source player', designed to address all the needs of the modern music listener. So while it lacks the all-new drive mechanism of the SA-10, which allows that player to handle not just SACD discs but hi-res music files burnt to DVD-R and CD-R discs, it will still play CDs, and MP3/WMA files on CD-R/RW media.

Hi-resolution capability is provided by its ability to play a wide range of music formats either from a computer connected via its asynchronous USB Type B input or on USB storage media plugged into its front-panel USB Type A socket. The ND8006 also has both Bluetooth connectivity and Apple AirPlay

compatibility, allowing instant wireless streaming from phones, tablets and computers. Furthermore, indicating that this isn't just a stripped-down SA-10 but an entirely different animal, the ND8006 has built-in network audio streaming, enabling it not only to play music from computers and network-attached storage devices over either Ethernet or Wi-Fi but also to deliver streaming services including Amazon Music, Deezer, Spotify Connect and Tidal (subject to the relevant subscriptions), and of course internet radio.

**The ND8006 has a claim of its own: this player, we are told, is designed to address all the needs of the modern music listener**

As if that weren't enough, the Marantz can be operated using Amazon Alexa devices, allowing it to be voice-controlled, and as the icing on the cake – well, not quite, as it's becoming an integral part of models across the Denon and Marantz ranges – there's also built-in HEOS multiroom capability. That allows the ND8006 to integrate with a wide range of HEOS-capable products to create a whole-house audio system, and not just HEOS speakers: HEOS is widely available now in both Denon and Marantz AV receivers, not to mention devices designed to add multiroom facilities to existing systems.

So it seems those claims of completeness maybe aren't too wide of the mark, and



### MARANTZ ND8006

**Type** Network CD player

**Price** £1099

**Discs played** CD, CD-R/RW (including MP3/WMA files)

**Digital inputs** USB Type A and B, coaxial and two optical, Bluetooth, Airplay

**Digital outputs** Coaxial, optical

**Analogue outputs** Fixed or variable, plus headphones

**Networking** Ethernet/Wi-Fi

**Other services** Internet radio; Amazon Music, Deezer, Spotify Connect and Tidal; Alexa compatibility; HEOS multiroom

**File formats played** PCM-based to 384kHz/32-bit; DSD to DSD256/11.2MHz

**Accessories supplied** Remote handset, Wi-Fi antennae

**Finishes** Black or silver-gold

**Dimensions** (WxHxD) 44x10.6x36.9cm (H 16.5cm with Wi-Fi antennae)

**marantz.co.uk**

the Marantz has wide-ranging format compatibility, enabling it to play just about any file you may come across. As well as the usual coaxial and optical digital inputs, the combination of USB Type B 'computer

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## SUGGESTED PARTNERS

There's an obvious partner for the Marantz player and one not-so-obvious one ...

### MARANTZ PM8006

Make the most of the sound of the ND8006 with the matching Marantz PM8006 amplifier, complete with 70Wpc output.



### Q ACOUSTICS CONCEPT 500

Yes indeed, the big Q Acoustics Concept 500 floorstanding speakers – but the PM8006 is enough to drive them and the ND8006 has all the quality needed.



audio' and playback from USB storage media means it can handle PMC-based content all the way up to 384kHz/32-bit and 'quad DSD' (also known as DSD256 and DSD11.2MHz). That's all handled using a digital-to-analogue conversion system based around the ESS 9016 'Sabre' chipset, together with dual crystal clocks for accurate handling of both 44.1kHz and 48kHz and their multiples without any need for clock-rate conversion.

Upstream of the DAC is the company's own Marantz Musical Digital Filtering system, designed as an offshoot of the development process for the SA-10 player and used in place of the standard filtering built into the DAC here. It provides a choice of digital filter settings – the default Filter 1 produces the cleanest, most detailed sound, while Filter 2 injects a bit of 'analogue' warmth – and also lets you select between 'Narrow', 'Medium' and 'Wide' digital lock range. In general the narrower the lock range, the less jitter and the clearer the sound, but too narrow a range can cause drop-outs, which is why the default is 'Narrow' for CD and 'Wide' for everything else. However, one can experiment. The USB Type B input and the optical/coaxial digital inputs have a noise reduction circuit, designed to avoid stray interference from the supplying device, and it's also possible to switch off the digital outputs, which again tidies the sound a shade.

The analogue section here uses the familiar Marantz HDAMs (or Hyper Dynamic Amplifier Modules), using miniature components where lesser designs would opt for chip amps, and the ND8006 has a dedicated headphone amplifier section, again HDAM-powered. The main analogue outputs are available on both fixed- and variable-level sockets, so the player can be used into a conventional amplifier or pre-amp, or direct into a power amp or active speakers. It's possible to turn off the variable outputs if required, again in the quest for signal purity, and both the headphone stage and the Bluetooth/AirPlay section can be switched off for the same reasons.

## PERFORMANCE

Regular readers will know that I 'get' the way Marantz thinks, having enjoyed

both demonstrations and extended time spent with its products in the course of reviews; and the ND8006, for all its versatility, is very much classic Marantz at heart. That means a sound that puts the music to the fore at all times and uses the finer points of hi-fi – among them sound-staging, detail, dynamics and weight – to facilitate that task. This isn't a player to have you thinking 'heavens, that's very hi-fi': rather it wraps you in a musical performance with a remarkable sense of connection, whether you choose a solo instrumental set such as Martin Helmchen's recent release of Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* (Alpha, 4/18) or the thrilling live recording of Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances* by the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra under Mariss Jansons (BR-Klassik, 4/18).

The balance here is warm and generous, yet with no hint of excessive bloom or bloat, meaning that rhythms are snappy and tight, and the growl of low strings is delivered with particular conviction. The midband is beautifully explicit and well judged, making orchestral recordings vivid, while the treble manages to convey plenty of ambience without ever straying into excessive brightness.

If you find this explicit sound a bit too much you can calm things down with that switchable digital filter, going for a smoother, slightly more lush presentation – as you might, for example, if your speakers are a bit treble-happy – but doing so steals a little of the airiness and presence that's so much a part of the way this Marantz plays things. I'd stick with the default filter and as narrow a digital lock range as you can manage without drop-outs: there's just a little less definition as the range is widened.

What's more, the Marantz maintains its performance across the full range of file formats and services it offers. Whether with Tidal music streams or what few quad-DSD files there are out there it sounds equally involving, and even lowish bit-rate internet radio streams are delivered convincingly. Plus it's also a rather good CD player, meaning it can form a neat bridge between 'physical media' collections and those more based around computers and files. **G**

## Or you could try...

**The all-in-one player solution isn't new: we've had CD receivers before. However, the idea is gaining momentum with the greater interest in computer-based audio, and models such as the Marantz are a sensible bridge between existing CD collections and streamed/downloaded music.**

### Onkyo's C-N7050

Onkyo's C-N7050, for example, is a CD player complete with both digital playback from a computer and network streaming, and can handle audio up to 192kHz/24-bit and DSD56/128. Selling for a little under £500, it provides a more affordable alternative to the ND8006. See more at [eu.onkyo.com](http://eu.onkyo.com).



### Yamaha's CD-N301

Even lower-priced is Yamaha's CD-N301, at £329: it's a slightly more basic player but will still access streaming services and network-stored music as well as playing your CDs. It comes in the company's characteristically simple but elegant styling, with a clean look and a marked absence of front-panel complications. More information at [europe.yamaha.com](http://europe.yamaha.com).



### Musical Fidelity M6 Encore Connect

The £3630 M6 Encore Connect is a frequent visitor to this section and it's not hard to see why. It may be premium-priced but it is hugely capable, adding disc ripping and storage to playback and network streaming. As well as offering an integrated solution, it can also act as a hub for other streaming players on your network – as you can discover at [encore.musicalfidelity.co.uk](http://encore.musicalfidelity.co.uk).



### Marantz SA-10

Finally, a mention for the ND8006's 'big brother', the £5999 Marantz SA-10. It lacks network streaming ability but is possibly one of the finest CD players ever built, and can work with your computer or USB storage to play downloaded music to a superlative standard. Find out more at [marantz.co.uk](http://marantz.co.uk).



## ● REVIEW BOWERS & WILKINS PX

# Clever comfort for your head

B&W strengthens its headphone range with intelligent design and adaptive noise cancellation

Like loudspeakers, headphones may look like some of the simplest hi-fi products you can buy: a pair of drive-units, mounted in housings, suspended on a headband and with a cable to connect to an amplifier. And yet in the modern audio world, which has seen an explosion in the popularity of headphone listening, designs have become anything but simple as each manufacturer strives to set its products apart from those of its rivals.

We've seen all kinds of driver technologies and the widespread adoption of Bluetooth technology for use with mobile devices; and, with phones and tablets gradually dropping the provision of standard headphone sockets, supposedly to allow them to be made even slimmer, such wireless technology is likely to become even more common. Meanwhile noise-cancellation is becoming more widely adopted: once only found in a limited number of designs, it's now in all sorts of models, designed not just for frequent flyers but for commuters and city-dwellers too.

Bowers & Wilkins, best known as a loudspeaker company, has been developing its headphone line for some time. Its headphones have become known for their skeletal design, the use of high-quality materials and excellent sound quality, and now it launches its most advanced model to date in the form of the PX.

Slotting in between the P3/P5 models and the flagship P9 Signature, the PX combines Bluetooth wireless operation – in this case with aptX HD for hi-res sound – with adaptive noise cancellation, and adds some neat operational functions designed to make it more intuitive in use. It also works with a dedicated headphone app for Android and iOS, allowing tuning of its functionality.

With the PX charged (using a USB-A-to-USB-C cable supplied, either from a computer or a mobile phone charger, to give a claimed 22-hour running time), paired to a mobile device via Bluetooth, the app will detect it and connect. Then comes one of the inevitabilities of modern audio life, at least when unboxing products for the first time: the firmware update check. In the case of the review pair, an update was detected, downloaded and installed using my phone's data connection, the phone transferring the update to the headset automatically. It's all fairly fast and totally painless, after which shutting the

headphones down and then powering back on means you're ready to listen.

The app will let you adjust what the company calls the Environment Filter, with different noise-cancelling parameters for use in the office, on the street or on a plane (or bus or train) and adjustable voice pass-through. You can also turn on the 'Wear sensor', which allows convenient features such as pausing playback when you lift an earcup or hang the headphones round your neck, resuming when they are back in place, and automatic standby when you take the PX off and put it down. Adjustable sensitivity avoids this system triggering prematurely or failing to operate when you want it to.

Noise-cancellation is designed not just for frequent flyers but for commuters and city-dwellers too

The PX uses an upsampling system to take all incoming signals up to 768kHz for digital processing, and no fewer than six microphones: four for the noise-cancelling system and two allowing speech when used with a mobile phone. In situations where you can't use Bluetooth, or when the batteries are depleted, they can also be used as wired headphones, either from a computer using the USB-C cable or from other devices using a conventional analogue cable terminated with a 3.5mm plug, which is also supplied.

### PERFORMANCE

The PX is as comfortable as almost all the B&W headphones, even if it can't quite match the luxury feel of the much more expensive P9 Signature model. There's a well-padded headband, a good range of adjustment and memory foam earpads, with leather trim where they meet the head, and ballistic nylon on the outer surfaces. The elliptical earpieces fit well, with both swivel and angle adjustment; the drivers are angled within the earpieces for more accurate sound-staging; and the headphones weigh 335g, making them fine for extended use.

The fit is positive without being restrictive. The headphones fold flat into the supplied quilted travel case for transportation and controls are well



### SPECIFICATION

#### BOWERS & WILKINS PX

**Type** Bluetooth headphones with noise cancellation

**Price** £329

**Connectivity** Bluetooth with aptX HD, USB, analogue cable

**Features** Three-mode noise-cancellation with adjustable voice pass-through, Wear sensor pause/play/standby, all controlled via Android/iOS app; twin microphones for telephony

**Accessories supplied** USB and 3.5mm analogue cables, carrying pouch

**Finishes** Black/Space Grey or dark blue/Soft Gold

**Weight** 335g

**bowers-wilkins.co.uk**

positioned on the right earpiece. They become instinctive after a little use, although you can also use the controls on the connected device. Audio responses let the user know what's going on, for example indicating successful Bluetooth connection.

Perhaps the most telling aspect of the PX is that it sounds every bit as good as the P5 model, for example, despite all the extra stuff built in. The sound is crisp, clean and well weighted, only losing a little definition when the noise cancellation is in use, something acknowledged by the app, which says 'Leave this off when in low or no noise environments for the best sound'. That said, benefits of the 'Environmental Filter' far outweigh the slight softening when listening in noisy environments and make the 'on the go' listening experience much more enjoyable.

Also impressive are the 'out of the head' sound-staging effects the PX can deliver. It's not quite the uncanny sound of the P9 Signature but the combination of openness and three-dimensionality is impressive for a closed-back design, let alone one laden with all the signal processing here. Whether with orchestral works or the simplicity of a set such as Patricia Kopatchinskaja and Polina Leschenko's 'Deux' programme of Bartók, Poulenc and Ravel (Alpha, 2/18), the clarity and musical flow is entirely natural and involving, making these headphones a fine buy for anyone requiring their unique mix of abilities. **G**



## ● ESSAY

# What is the hidden cost of convenience?

Our increasingly connected world allows our hi-fi systems to do things that would have been unimaginable just a few years ago – but is it at a cost to the sound?

Something wasn't right. I'm all too familiar with the problems of making a good sound in a hi-fi show demonstration, but even by those shudder-inducing standards I could sense that all wasn't well. Yes, some demonstrations were better than others, but increasingly I found myself having to 'listen through what I was hearing' for some hint of promise, some spark of inspiration. And I didn't envy the exhibitors one little bit, having spent 20 years or so of late nights and endless fiddling trying to get equipment I knew was very good to live up to something approaching its potential in an unfamiliar show environment.

Yes, you can adjust the position of your electronics and speakers as much as you want, and eventually find the best set-up in the room you are given, and yes, you can bring in all manner of acoustic treatments designed to tame some of the worse modes of spaces designed for sleeping in, not listening – but you're facing an uphill struggle. You can even go to the lengths of bringing in some mains conditioning or filtration, in order to ameliorate the effects of power supplies polluted by masses of fluorescent lights, phone chargers, air-conditioners, TVs, in-room fridges, lifts and more. Many years back I remember attending a show in one of the grand old hotels in New York where the outside of the building was festooned with mains cables feeding the rooms through opened windows, in a desperate attempt to get round the appallingly 'dirty' power available at the sockets in the rooms.

And indeed, at this most recent show, there was every sign that many exhibitors had done all this, and more, in their efforts to show off their products in the best light, and clearly some had managed better than others. Yet there was still something wrong: a general softness and sibilance seemingly affecting just about every system I heard, and making generally uninteresting the sound of even systems I knew ought to be very good indeed, given past experience of the components in use.

It was in one of these moments of uninterest that I think I might have stumbled over one of the causes of the malaise. Looking at my phone while waiting to speak to a demonstrator who was mid-flow, I noted that there was no



Streamed music demonstrations are now the norm at hi-fi shows but do we need to pay more attention to the effect all that Wi-Fi may be having on sound quality?



shortage of Wi-Fi networks visible to it. A lot of networks, in fact: the majority of exhibitors were using their own networks either to allow control via apps on tablets or phones, or – in the case of some very brave souls – live-streaming the music for their demonstrations from services such as Qobuz, Spotify and Tidal. That's brave because the internet access at such shows is flaky at best, as evidenced by the fact that I witnessed more than one mid-tune freeze – hardly the best advert for the benefits of streaming.

**The system I thought was extremely good was now both more involving and sounded a lot less forced**

So, lots of networks, meaning lots of network switches and routers, many of them likely powered by the noisy 'out of the box' switching plug-top supplies, and also many conflicting Wi-Fi systems flooding the show with potential interference. And in case you think I exaggerate, firing up an app on my phone revealed that in one room I could 'see' no fewer than 23 networks, only two of which were the hotel's default services. That's a lot of radio floating around.

OK, so it's an artificial environment; but unless you live in the middle of nowhere, chances are your listening room is exposed to more than a few networks from neighbouring properties. That's before you factor in all kinds of radio-based sending and receiving equipment you may have in your home, in an age when just about everything that can be made 'smart'

is having communication built into it. We've come a long way since your worst threat of interference was the local minicab company's radio system or (as once happened to me in a small flat where I used to live) wonderful science fiction noises through my hi-fi whenever the neighbours the other side of the party wall fired up their big – well, a 32in screen was big in those days – old CRT television.

Thinking about all this on the drive back from the hi-fi show, I decided to carry out an experiment on my own system which, as regular readers will know, already has extensive measures in place to isolate it as much as possible from the network to which it's connected. Choosing a time when I was 'home alone' to avoid the 'where's the internet gone?' howls, I disconnected everything from the network apart from my NAS unit, my network player and a computer to control it, all connected through just one network switch via Ethernet cables, turned off the Wi-Fi, unplugged all the various switches and devices, and sat back to listen.

The difference was far from subtle, both in terms of the clarity of detail and the dynamics of the music, and in the sheer ease of listening. The system I thought was extremely good was now both more involving and sounded a lot less forced; the kind of improvement one might expect from an upgrade of source component or amplification. In fact I was able to make some subtle adjustments of the speaker positions and further focus the improved sound stage image I was now hearing, snapping things into really pin-sharp focus and enhancing the sense of front-to-back depth.

The effect was all rather magical, the result of precisely zero expenditure and totally repeatable, as I proved to myself by reconnecting everything and hearing the sound soften, then going back to the 'minimal' set-up and experiencing the free-breathing version. It seems we may be adding convenience to our lives, but with it comes potential interference.

So now all I have to do is go through the whole household network step-by-step and see which elements have the most effect, and which are liveable-with for the sake of convenience. Not sure what I can do about the neighbours, though ... **G**



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# NOTES & LETTERS

The artistry of Andor Foldes • Ernest Lough remembered • How to stage opera today

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## Ernest Lough

Thank you for the excellent tribute to Ernest Lough in May (page 64). I was a considerably younger and junior colleague of his in the advertising agency Mather & Crowther, as it was then called, and can attest to the personal qualities described by Jeremy Nicholas. In spite of our relative positions he was always completely friendly, humorous and willing to help me, a lesser mortal, with advice on a range of subjects. He once told me of his amusement when from time to time HMV would ring him up and tell him that another elderly lady had been in touch with them asking where his grave was!

I have bought the Naxos CD and find to my delight that the sound is much improved with very little background hiss and that, more importantly, Ernest's voice comes across magically. In spite of rather intrusive organ and piano accompaniments, the effect is still wonderful and like no other.

James Bruxner CBE  
Buntingford, Herts

## Respecting opera ...

Although I thoroughly agree that opera is *not* a museum culture, I cannot approve of Edward Seckerson's acceptance of anything goes (April, page 13). Opera must undergo acceptable changes. Peter Stein, Patrice Chéreau, Jean-Pierre Ponnelle and many others have created memorable stagings even for masterpieces with a long tradition of classical productions.

However, in today's world we seem to overlook that most operas have two authors. The libretto and, additionally in certain cases its sources, are a secondary but fundamental part of the work. Many new elements including modifying the time of the action can be created without overlooking what the authors have written.

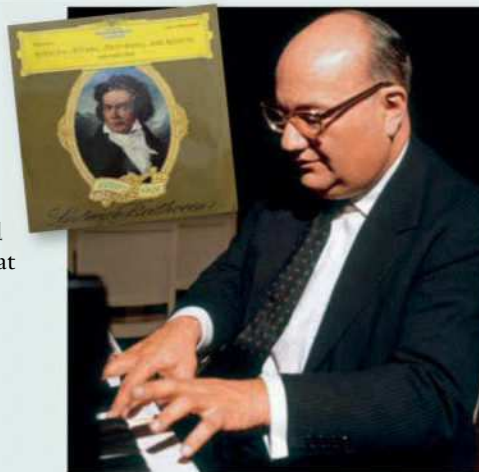
After seeing over 1200 operas (the first being a traditional staging of *Meistersinger* conducted by Erich Kleiber at the Teatro Colón in 1949), I feel that the spirit and the true essence of the opera are much too often today transformed or directly destroyed by the production. Let's have *Così fan tutte* at Coney Island if needs be, but not being able to grasp even shreds of the Overture while noisy circus shenanigans become more important than

## Letter of the Month

### Fondness for Foldes

As a schoolboy in 1955, I introduced myself to Beethoven's piano sonatas by listening to my father's 78rpm recordings with Artur Schnabel. Your review of Andor Foldes in July 1962 – '*Les adieux* receives a wholly delightful performance ... This is playing of great distinction' – convinced me to get the LP. It changed my teenage world, and has been on my mind ever since.

But I had been wondering what had happened to these recordings – had they been forgotten? – until your inclusion of two DG Eloquence recordings of Foldes playing Beethoven sonatas (Replay, March, page 96). 'His playing is a pleasure to listen to on its own terms, rather like enjoying the precise workings of a meticulously engineered watch movement,' wrote



Andor Foldes: a Beethoven pianist of distinction

your critic Rob Cowan. Fifty-six years on, what a delightful Wiedersehen!  
Per Södersten  
Stockholm, Sweden

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Mozart doesn't add anything worthwhile to what the score and libretto tells us.

Creativity, yes. But bear in mind that productions can avoid being museum pieces without changing what the operas were meant to say in the first place.

Jorge Helft  
Montevideo & Paris

### ... or keeping it fresh?

As a professional film and music critic, I have always enjoyed Edward Seckerson's column. His thoughts on Barrie Kosky's *Carmen* caught my interest since I reviewed the DVD of this director's brilliant new staging of Handel's *Saul* two years ago. As a frequent visitor to New York's Metropolitan Opera, I have seen well-received new approaches to old warhorses like Michael Mayer's 'Las Vegas' *Rigoletto* and, most recently, Phelim McDermott's 'Coney Island' version of *Così fan tutte*. If there aren't more such efforts to rethink the operatic staples, once the ageing audiences that want only the traditional stagings have passed away, there won't be the new

audiences needed to keep this marvellous art form alive and well. Newly conceived productions of traditional operas do not always succeed but, when they do, it is like seeing these works for the very first time.

Lawrence Devoe  
Augusta, GA, USA

## Editorial notes

In our review of 'Ceremonial Oxford: Music for the Georgian University' (May, page 80) we named the soloist in the Hayes Organ Concerto as Edward Higginbottom; it was in fact Matthew Martin who played the solo part 'with breezy assurance ... and gentleness'.

Regarding Rob Cowan's review of Alexander Borovsky's Bach (Replay, April, page 125), the correct website to order CDs is [alexanderkborovsky.blogspot.com](http://alexanderkborovsky.blogspot.com)

In his review of Ethel Smyth's *The Boatswain's Mate* (May, page 93), Neil Fisher writes that the set has taken two years to be released. In fact, Retrospect Opera did release it back in 2016 but it had limited availability. The label has only now acquired general UK distribution.



# OBITUARIES

A French early music pioneer and a pianist of style and taste

## JEAN-CLAUDE MALGOIRE

*Conductor*

*Born November 25, 1940*

*Died April 14, 2018*



Born in Avignon to a French father and Italian mother, Malgoire studied at the Conservatoire in Paris where he focused on the oboe, graduating at 16.

He joined the young Orchestre de Paris and was soon the orchestra's Principal, playing and recording under Karajan, Solti, Ozawa and others. He cited performing with André Cluytens as a major milestone: 'This was my first experience with a great conductor and I learnt an enormous amount from him, particularly in the field of French music.'

But like Nikolaus Harnoncourt (one-time cellist in the Vienna Symphony Orchestra), Malgoire had, in his mind, a different concept of approaching Classical music as well as a desire to explore music of the French Baroque. In 1966, he founded La Grande Écurie et la Chambre du Roy, a period-instrument ensemble that performed music from the Baroque and Classical eras with whom he recorded extensively (he remained with the Orchestre de Paris until 1973). Four years later, he founded another ensemble: 'Once I had begun on Baroque music', Malgoire told *Gramophone* in May 1977, 'I wanted to explore very early music and at the same time keep in touch with what was happening in contemporary music so I formed the Florilegium Musicum de Paris in 1970, a group which could play both early and modern music and we often mixed the two in our concerts.'

With La Grande Écurie et la Chambre du Roy, Malgoire made several pioneering recordings of French Baroque operas, initially for CBS (now Sony Classical), and subsequently for Astrée Auvédis, Alpha, Erato and Dynamic. Recorded works include Neukomm's *Requiem à la mémoire de Louis XVI*, Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Salieri's *Falstaff*, Rameau's *Les Indes Galantes* and Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. The music of Monteverdi (the Vespers, *Orfeo* and a selection of madrigals) and Handel (the concerti grossi, *Rinaldo*, *Orlando*, *Messiah*, *Agrippina* and *Water Music*) is also well represented on disc.

## LÍVIA RÉV

*Pianist*

*Born July 5, 1916*

*Died March 28, 2018*



The Hungarian pianist Livia Rév has died in Paris at the age of 101. Rév began her studies with Margit Varro, famously winning the Grand Prix des Enfants Prodiges at the age of just nine.

In later years, she studied with Leó Weiner at the Franz Liszt Academy, Professor Robert Teichmüller at the Leipzig Conservatoire and Paul Weingarten at the Vienna Conservatoire. Having heard her in Paris, Sir Malcolm Sargent helped bring her to the attention of the British public by inviting notable musical figures in London to her Wigmore Hall debut in 1948; he subsequently encouraged fellow conductors to engage her for concertos. During her career, Rév performed with, among others, Boult, Jochum and Silvestri.

One of her most famous recordings is the complete Chopin Nocturnes (Hyperion, 1998); other recordings include, also for Hyperion, Mendelssohn's *Songs Without Words* (1986) and 'For Children' (1985, a compilation album of music by composers include Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann and Fauré) which was described in these pages as 'an adventurous and well-devised recital, as well played as it is recorded'.

Due to her small hands, Rév was somewhat limited regarding her repertoire choices but she was nevertheless able to master the works of composers such as Liszt. She elaborated on this in *Gramophone* in 1979: 'One can compensate to some extent for lack of physical strength. Rubinstein, for instance, once heard me play – the piano was between me and him so he couldn't see my fingers – and to my amusement he told me, "You may be small, but my goodness you have big hands!"'

Although Rév's recordings were highly praised, they didn't necessarily receive the publicity they deserved. *Gramophone* alluded to this in 1998, stating that she was 'a superb artist whose recordings should be better known'.

In later life, Rév settled in Paris with her husband, and taught at the Université Musicale Internationale de Paris.

**NEXT MONTH**  
**JULY 2018**



## Power to the percussionists!

Andrew Mellor talks to Colin Currie and other leading percussionists about excelling in their field, the necessity of working with composers, and the thrill of cross-genre collaboration

## Opera Rara: still going strong at 40

Richard Lawrence celebrates the pioneering label whose fearless approach to little-known operas has resulted in many studio recordings and, this July, a world premiere at Covent Garden

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### HUDDERSFIELD CONTEMPORARY RECORDS

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**Various Cpsrs** Beyond Pythagoras. *Adkins/Sundin/Axelsson/Stockholm Sax Qt.* ⑆ **HCR18CD**

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### HYPERION

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**Beethoven** Pf Sons, Vol 7. *Hewitt.* ⑆ **CDA68199**

**Charpentier** Leçons de Ténèbres. Litanies. Magnificat. *Arcangelo/Cohen.* ⑆ **CDA68171**

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**Byrd** One Byrde in Hande. *Egarr.* ⑆ **CKD518**

**Rachmaninov. Sibelius** Songs. *Imbrailo/Hogarth.* ⑆ **CKD482**

**Various Cpsrs** British Orch Premieres. *Various artists.* ⑤ ④ ② **REAM2139**



<b>MELODIYA</b>	<i>melodysu</i>
Mussorgsky Pf Wks (r1982-2017). <i>Various artists.</i>	🇫🇪 📀 <b>MELCD100 2541</b>
Prokofiev Vn Sons. <i>Pritchlin/Favorin.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>MELCD100 2524</b>
<b>MÉTIER</b>	<i>divine-art.co.uk</i>
Fox Untouch Mulvey Aeolus. <i>Fox/Mulvey.</i>	📀 <b>MDS290006</b>
Trandafilovski Diptych. <i>Sheppard Skærved/Chadwick/ Kreutzer Qt/Longbow Ens.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>MSV28582</b>
<b>NAXOS</b>	<i>naxos.com</i>
Bach, JS English Stes (arr Two Gtrs). <i>Montenegrin Gtr Duo.</i>	🇲🇸 <b>8 573676</b>
Corea Gtr Wks. <i>Cucchi.</i>	🇲🇸 <b>8 573917</b>
Diamond Sym No 6. Orch Wks. <i>Indiana Univ CO &amp; PO/Fagen.</i>	🇲🇸 <b>8 559842</b>
Hernández Music & Poetry. <i>Toba/Conde/Mariné.</i>	🇲🇸 <b>8 579027</b>
Poulenc Biches. Animaux modèles. <i>RTÉ Nat SO/Tingaud.</i>	🇲🇸 <b>8 573739</b>
Rachmaninov Pf Conc No 3. Corelli Vars. <i>Giltburg/RSNO/Prieto.</i>	🇲🇸 <b>8 573630</b>
Rode Vn Concs Nos 11 & 12. <i>Eichhorn/Jena PO/Pasquet.</i>	🇲🇸 <b>8 573474</b>
Sarasate Cpte Wks for Vn & Pf. <i>Yang/Hadulla.</i>	📀 ④ 🇮🇹 <b>8 504054</b>
Schumann Vc Conc. Wks for Vc & Pf. <i>Schwabe/Rimmer/Royal Northern Sinf/Vogt.</i>	🇲🇸 <b>8 573786</b>
Sierra, R Chbr Wks. <i>Continuum.</i>	🇲🇸 <b>8 559849</b>
Smetana Festive Sym. Orch Wks. <i>Berlin RSO/Ang.</i>	🇲🇸 <b>8 573672</b>
Telemann Six Ovs. <i>Nakagawa.</i>	🇲🇸 <b>8 573819</b>
Viardot, P & P Wks for Vn & Pf. <i>Kuppel/Manz.</i>	🇲🇸 <b>8 573749</b>
Various Cpsrs British Wks for Va & Orch. <i>Callus/New Zealand SO/Taddei.</i>	🇲🇸 <b>8 573876</b>
Various Cpsrs Pf Concs. Pf Wks. <i>Biret.</i>	📀 ⑫ 🇮🇹 <b>8 501207</b>
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Coates Conducts. <i>Coates.</i>	🇲🇸 ② 🇮🇹 <b>NI7106</b>
Wagner Orch Highlights. <i>LSO/Butt, Y.</i>	🇲🇸 ② <b>NI7101</b>
<b>NMC</b>	<i>nmrec.co.uk</i>
Various Cpsrs Onyx noir. <i>Onyx Brass.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>NMCD237</b>
<b>ONDINE</b>	<i>ondine.net</i>
Bach, JS. Schumann Chor Wks. <i>Estonian Philh Chbr Ch/Helsinki Baroque Orch/Häkkinen.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>ODE1312-2</b>
Swiridov Canticles & Prayers. <i>Latvian Rad Ch/Klava.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>ODE1322-2</b>
<b>OPERA RARA</b>	<i>opera-rara.com</i>
Offenbach Fantasio. <i>Sols incl Connolly/OAE/Elder.</i>	🇲🇸 ② <b>ORC351</b>
<b>OPUS ARTE</b>	
Wagner Meistersinger von Nürnberg (pp2008). <i>Sols incl Hawlata/Bayreuth Fest Orch/Weigle.</i>	🇲🇸 ④ <b>OACD9031DBD</b>
<b>ORCHID</b>	<i>orchidclassics.com</i>
Beethoven Pf Trios, Vol 1. <i>Trio Con Brio, Copenhagen.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>ORC100081</b>
Korngold. Nielsen Vn Concs. <i>Lee, J/Odense SO/Poska.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>ORC100079</b>
<b>ORFEO</b>	<i>orfeo-international.de</i>
Liszt Années de pèlerinage - année 1: Suisse. <i>Piemontesi.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>C944 1821</b>
Mendelssohn Sym No 3 Widmann 180 Beats per Minute. Fantasie. <i>Irish CO/Widmann.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>C945 181A</b>
<b>PALADINO</b>	<i>paladino.at</i>
Farrenc Pf Vars. <i>Tzinlikova.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>PMR0088</b>
<b>PENTATONE</b>	<i>pentatonemusic.com</i>
Bartók. Kodály Concs for Orch. <i>Berlin RSO/Hrůša.</i>	🇫🇪 📀 <b>PTC5186 626</b>
Bizet Pêcheurs de perles. <i>Sols/Lille Nat Orch/Bloch.</i>	🇫🇪 ② 📀 <b>PTC5186 685</b>
Various Cpsrs Certain Slant of Light: Songs on Poems of Emily Dickinson. <i>Delan/Marseille PO/Foster.</i>	🇫🇪 📀 <b>PTC5186 634</b>
Various Cpsrs Prologue. <i>Aspromonte/Pomo d'Oro/Onofri.</i>	🇫🇪 📀 <b>PTC5186 646</b>

<b>PHI</b>	<i>outhere-music.com/phi</i>
Monteverdi Vespers. <i>Collegium Vocale Gent/Herreweghe.</i>	🇫🇪 ② <b>LPH029</b>
<b>PIANO CLASSICS</b>	<i>piano-classics.com</i>
Brahms Pf Concs Nos 1 & 2. <i>Maltempo/Mitteleuropa Orch/ Guidarini.</i>	🇫🇪 ② <b>PCL10145</b>
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Gebel. Schubert Stg Octets. <i>Hoffmeister Qt/Sols of Wroclaw Baroque Orch.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>PH17071</b>
Quantz Fl Concs. <i>Lamb/Cologne Academy/Willens.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>PH18023</b>
Various Cpsrs Arias. <i>Pütz.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>PH18012</b>
Various Cpsrs Pf Trios. <i>Meininger Trio.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>PH17080</b>
Various Cpsrs Wks for Fl & Pf. <i>Fassbender/Wieck.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>PH18005</b>
<b>REFERENCE RECORDINGS</b>	<i>referencerecordings.com</i>
Chesnokov Teach me thy Statutes. <i>Patram Institute Male Ch/ Gorbik.</i>	🇫🇪 📀 <b>FR727</b>
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Various Cpsrs Saint Louis Classics. <i>Saint Louis Chbr Chor/ Barnes.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>REGCD505</b>
<b>RESONUS</b>	<i>resonusclassics.com</i>
Bach, JS Kybd Partitas. <i>Van Delft.</i>	🇲🇸 ② <b>RES10212</b>
Davison, G Awake My Soul. <i>Wells Cath Ch/Owens.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>RES10211</b>
<b>RONDEAU PRODUCTION</b>	<i>rondeau.de</i>
Bach, JS Ascension Oratorio. <i>Gutenberg Chbr Ch/Neumayr Consort/Koch.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>ROP6154</b>
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Various Cpsrs Virtuosissima cantatrice. <i>Various artists.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>SAR72</b>
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Various Cpsrs Art of (r1950-91). <i>Nikolayeva.</i>	📀 (37 CDs) 🇮🇹 <b>SC810</b>
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Mendelssohn Stg Qts Nos 1, 2 & 6. <i>Tippett Qt.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>SOMMCD0182</b>
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<b>STERLING</b>	<i>sterlingcd.com</i>
Biörklund-Jullander Improvisations, Concert Études & Meditations. <i>Biörklund-Jullander.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>CDA1824</b>
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Various Cpsrs Orch Wks. <i>Bělohávek.</i>	📀 ⑧ 🇮🇹 <b>SU4250-2</b>
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Bruckner Sym No 7 (bp1958). <i>SWR RSO, Stuttgart/Hindemith.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>SWR19417CD</b>
Dvořák Slavonic Dances. <i>SWR Rad Orch, Kaiserslautern/Stárek.</i>	🇲🇸 🇮🇹 <b>SWR19501CD</b>
Hindemith. Prokofiev. Rautavaara Vc Concs (bp1971-75). Starker.	🇫🇪 <b>SWR19418CD</b>
Holst Planets. <i>SWR RSO, Stuttgart/Norrington.</i>	🇲🇸 🇮🇹 <b>SWR19507CD</b>
Ravel Orch Wks. <i>Auger/Carmirelli/SWR SO, Baden-Baden &amp; Freiburg/Bour.</i>	🇲🇸 <b>SWR19504CD</b>
Schubert Sym No 9. <i>SWR RSO, Stuttgart/Norrington.</i>	🇲🇸 <b>SWR19506CD</b>
Strauss, R Don Juan. Rosenkavalier Ste. Till Eulenspiegel. <i>SWR RSO, Stuttgart/Prêtre.</i>	🇲🇸 🇮🇹 <b>SWR19502CD</b>
Various Cpsrs Edn, Vol 7 (r1961-2006). <i>Gielen.</i>	📀 ⑧ 🇮🇹 <b>SWR19061CD</b>
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Bossi Cpte Org Wks, Vol 13. <i>Macinanti.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>TC862722</b>
Demachi Chbr Wks. <i>Trigono Armonico Ens.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>TC730401</b>
Ferrari, GG Trios & Sons. <i>Ruzza/Dal Don/Magris.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>TC760601</b>
Sinigaglia Vn Conc. Orch Wks. <i>Marzadori/Greco/Ferrara City Orch/Zuccarini.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>TC861901</b>
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Andriessen, H Pf Wks. <i>Nydegger.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>TOCC0436</b>
Dale Roberts Chbr & Inst Wks. <i>Sheppard Skærved/Chadwick/ Kreutzer Qt.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>TOCC0487</b>
Raykhelson Pf & Chbr Wks, Vol 1. <i>Asastova/Kniazev/Lifschitz/ Borodin Qt.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>TOCC0315</b>
Rosowsky Chbr Wks. Yiddish Songs. <i>Various artists.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>TOCC0479</b>
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LoDuca Bad Samaritan. <i>OST.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>302 067 571-8</b>
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Velazquez Submergence. <i>OST.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>302 067 562-8</b>
<b>WERGO</b>	<i>wergo.de</i>
Blake, M Philosophy of Composition - Wks for Vc & Pf. <i>Gauwerky/Vandewalle.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>WER7361-2</b>
Streich Pietà. <i>Various artists.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>WER6425-2</b>
Various Cpsrs Songs & Poems. <i>Trio Accanto.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>WER7364-2</b>
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<b>ARTHAUS MUSIK</b>	
Various Cpsrs Open Your Ears. <i>Albrecht, G.</i>	🇫🇪 ⑥ <b>DVD 109 085</b>
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Mozart Don Giovanni (pp2017). <i>Sols incl Alberghini &amp; Lungu/ Nat Th Orch/Domingo.</i>	🇫🇪 ② <b>DVD 745208</b> ; 🇫🇪 📀 <b>745304</b>
Rossini Mosè in Egitto (pp2017). <i>Sols incl Foster-Williams/ Vienna SO/Mazzola.</i>	🇫🇪 ② <b>DVD 744808</b> ; 🇫🇪 📀 <b>744904</b>
<b>DYNAMIC</b>	
Donizetti Borgomastro di Saardam. <i>Sols/Orch Donizetti Op/ Brignoli.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>DVD 37812</b> ; 🇫🇪 📀 <b>57812</b>
<b>NAXOS</b>	<i>naxos.com</i>
Berlioz Benvenuto Cellini. <i>Sols incl Sicilia, Osborn &amp; Naouri/ Rotterdam PO/Elder.</i>	🇫🇪 ② <b>DVD 2 110575/6</b> ; 🇫🇪 📀 <b>NBD0074V</b>
Various Cpsrs 75th Anniversary Concert. <i>Biret/Borusan Istanbul PO/Shimada.</i>	🇫🇪 <b>DVD 8 110567</b>
<b>OPUS ARTE</b>	
Elgar Enigma Vars Holst Planets. <i>BBC NOW/BBC SO/Atherton/ Davis, A.</i>	🇫🇪 ② <b>DVD OA1266BD</b>













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



































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# David Wooding

The Sun on Sunday's Political Editor on the origins of his lifelong musical journey

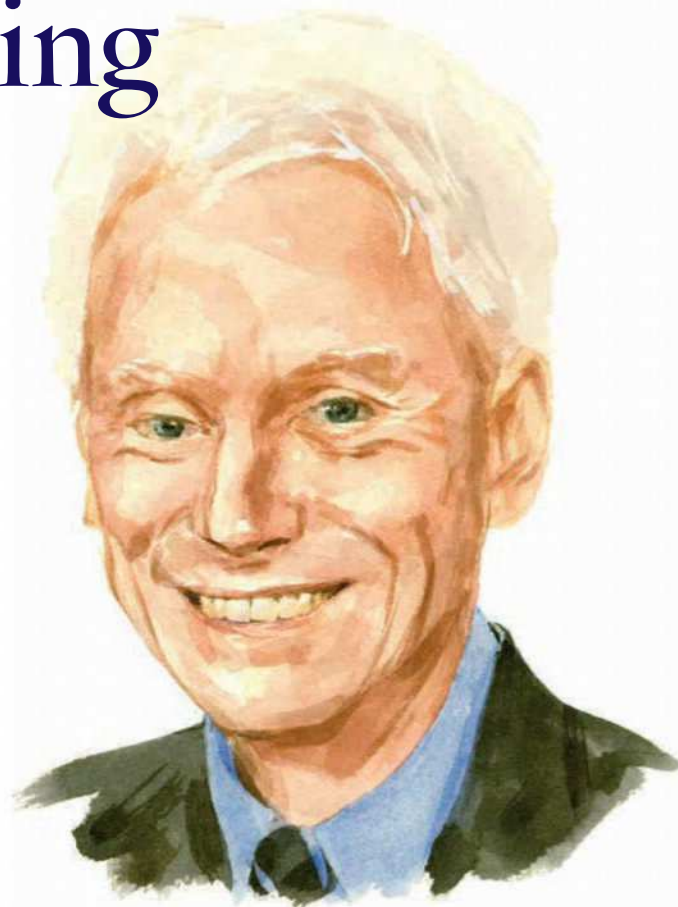
I was brought up in Liverpool in the '60s, and went to the same school as Ringo Starr (I hasten to add not at the same time) and we were all quite proud. I recall the excitement of Merseybeat days. Because of Ringo I wanted to play the drums, so my Dad said: 'You can play the drums when you've got a grip of the piano, but you've got to learn the basics first.' So I learnt the basics, and then I went to drum school. I quickly got to a good standard, and was playing in dance bands at the ages of 14 and 15 – I could sight-read, so they were throwing music at me. I was earning quite good money doing this, and while later training as a journalist it helped me pay my way through college. But the reality was that, while I was playing 'Tie a yellow ribbon round the ole oak tree', I really wanted to be banging the drum in Verdi's Requiem.

At primary school, going into morning assembly, the head teacher used to play bits of classical music on the old gramophone. I can actually visualise myself now, sitting there, legs crossed, listening to this music and focusing on something that wasn't the main tune – maybe an instrument that was coming in, or a harmony. Then at secondary school a pupil said: 'Oh, you like classical music – Mr Marshall has a music club, I'll ask if you can come.' I hadn't known this teacher as I never went to his school, but I used to walk about two miles on the first Saturday of every month to his house, rain, hail or snow. His wife would make orange juice and he'd play us bits of music: Dvořák, Brahms, Beethoven. He talked about the music, and told us stories about the composers.

Once he played a bit of César Franck's Symphony in D minor – that did something for me. You know when you get the little spark, a tingle down the spine? So I got his Piano Quintet, his tone poems, his violin sonata, Three Organ Chorales, and started exploring. And I thought – what else is there? And so I moved on to Vincent d'Indy, and Chausson. I was getting into all sorts of areas; it's like a mine, and discovering a new seam every time you tap into it.

Mr Marshall used to take us to hear the BBC Philharmonic, which was called the BBC Northern Symphony in those days; this was the first time I heard Benjamin Britten – *Les illuminations* – and we heard Stravinsky's *Petrushka*. And he took us to the Liverpool Phil where he knew a guy who used to allow us to watch from the canteen. We knelt on a long settee, by an open window, and watched for free, and were told: 'You cannot make a noise: if anybody makes a noise, you're out!' We were taught to sit still and to be able to listen.

NEMS, the shop in Liverpool where Brian Epstein had worked before he became The Beatles' manager, used to have a little sale section. I'd go in and thumb through it, and buy something with my pocket money. There would be things I'd absolutely never heard of, and I'd sometimes pick them



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because – I have to confess – they had nice covers. I remember buying Bloch's *Schelomo* and *Voice in the Wilderness*, and found myself on another listening journey. Though sometimes I'd play the record and think: 'What have I bought here?'

People say: 'You're into classical music – I'd like to be, but I don't know where to start.' So I talk to them about it, and produce lists. If you can get people to hear music live, they see it for what it is – so I book loads of tickets for the Proms, and if my wife can't come I take a colleague, or a friend, or an MP, or someone like that, and try and get them hooked on it.

I have a project where I decide I'm going to select something at the beginning of the year and work through it. So I will pick the Bach cantatas, for instance, and read about them, listen to them, and immerse myself in it all. Another year was the *Ring* cycle. When Ian Bostridge brought out his book on *Winterreise* I went through that reading a chapter, playing the song, through the winter, and then onto *Schwanengesang* as well. I think it's a great idea, because you do let yourself learn new things, you stretch yourself, and there are hidden gems in everything. It's just like being a journalist, discovering stories, discovering something new. **G**



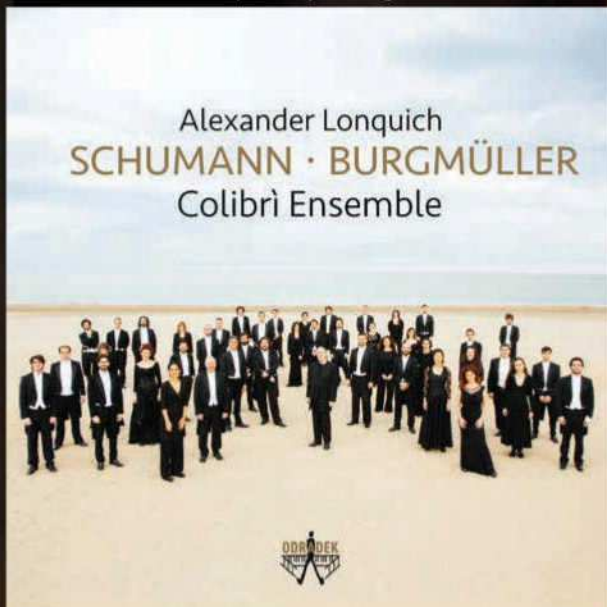
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Acclaimed pianist Alexander Lonquich and The Colibrì Ensemble bring their unique insight to Schumann's Piano Concerto and to the Symphony No. 2 by Schumann's contemporary, Burgmüller.



The lives of Robert Schumann and Norbert Burgmüller intersect in fascinating ways; Schumann even orchestrated the Scherzo of Burgmüller's *Symphony No. 2*. Alexander Lonquich has long been intrigued by the relationships between these two composers and their circle of influences. Schumann's *Piano Concerto* began life as a *Phantasie* for the composer's wife, pianist Clara Schumann, but was later augmented to become an irresistible full-length work. Burgmüller's *Second Symphony* unfolds with charming ease, undulating between genial lyricism and stormier interjections reminiscent of Beethoven's 'Pastoral' Symphony. The Colibrì Ensemble, based in Pescara, Italy, has forged strong relationships with a host of outstanding artists, including a special connection with Alexander Lonquich.

A disc of world-premiere recordings by Portuguese composer Luís Tinoco, performed by Seattle Symphony, Orquestra Gulbenkian, Orquestra Sinfónica Portuguesa, Orquestra Sinfónica do Porto Casa da Música



Tinoco's exhilarating and evocative style is encapsulated by the glittering scores featured on this release. *Before Spring* is a tribute to Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, while the vivid poetry of Manoel de Barros inspired *The Blue Voice of the Water*. In *Frisland* we explore an imaginary island first mapped out in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, with more recent musical influences from jazz artist Bill Frisell. Tinoco describes this vibrant work as "an imaginary voyage through an (also imaginary) soundworld inspired by Frisell's music". The magical, ethereal *Cello Concerto* is performed by Filipe Quaresma, acclaimed for his "precise, superbly articulated playing, full of passion..." (The Strad).



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